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Agricultural society of Albemarle County, Virginia

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AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY OF ALBEMARLE COUNTY,
VIRGINIA

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of History
University of Richmond

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements of the Degree
Master of Arts

by
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B.S. Old Dominion College
August 1965
Agricultural progress was an accomplishment which took many years to bring about in the Old Dominion. Commerce once established with other nations was disrupted by the American Revolutionary War. Even in the decades following the war, commerce was unstable and a general disappointment for the planter and yeomanry classes in Virginia. Tobacco still held its staple position and most classes of farmers clung to its stalks.

The first revival in agriculture started with men of large estates who desired to encourage agricultural reform. These men had suffered, by and large, from the constant growing of tobacco, and they were the first to recognize the need for crop rotation, crop diversification, and the use of manures in increasing soil fertility. Their efforts were generally confined to the "elite" few and therefore did not benefit the masses of "poor" farmers.

The first effective instrument of agricultural reform was the agricultural society. Societies began to form around 1810, but shortly after the signing of peace...
with England in 1815 began to decline. This was due primarily to the fact that wheat was the influencing factor in agricultural reform, and once hostilities erupted with England the market prices dropped measurably, thus causing a lack of interest to result. The dormant state which existed between 1815 and 1817 led to a second movement of interest in society forming. Unlike the first efforts, the second one was successful and lasted throughout the nineteenth century.

The agricultural society which took the lead in this second movement was the Agricultural Society of Albemarle; an organization founded by professional men who desired to bring about agricultural reform for all the people in Virginia. A long list of accomplishments occurred during the years in which the Society prospered, and some of the key agricultural reforms were introduced at their meetings. The decline of the Society came in late 1841 when a new and informal organization began to draw members from the more loosely formed Albemarle Society. Prosperity was brought to Albemarle County by the Society and its accomplishments may be measured by
the influence which it placed on Virginia agriculture.

In writing this paper, the author desired to accomplish three aims: first, to portray the agricultural conditions which existed in Virginia in the post-Revolutionary decades; second, to relate the accomplishments of the key agricultural leaders in the state; and third, to present an account of the accomplishments of the Agricultural Society of Albemarle.

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CHAPTER I

POST-REVOLUTIONARY AGRICULTURAL CONDITIONS

The ending of open hostilities with Great Britain and the signing of the Peace of Paris in 1783 left a new nation with many problems, a number of which would take decades to solve. American commerce had been disrupted with England and was hampered to a great degree by other countries. Currency was not worth a "continental" and its devaluation not only impeded merchants but agricultural interests as well, both planter and yeomanry classes. The war had taken a heavy toll on Virginia agriculture as in other states. Virginia had depended upon its staple crop, tobacco, for decades as a source of revenue. This revenue had been severed by war, not only in regards to commercial ties, but had forced men to put aside agricultural

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activities in order to bear arms in the defense of their country. Tobacco lost its "staple" position, and after the signing of peace it assumed a position considerably lower than it had once held. As a result of the war, the West Indies were now closed to American trade, and high duties were placed on American goods in English ports. Adverse as these measures were, they did not destroy the tobacco trade for several reasons. The war had not lasted long enough for ties to be severed between the English merchant and the planter. A market continued to exist for tobacco, although profits were considerably lower. Also the war had not lasted long enough for any profitable substitute to be successfully introduced. Another important factor was that both Great Britain and France adopted liberal trade policies toward...


3Henry C. Gilpin, Letters and Other Writings of James Madison (New York: R. Worthington, 1884), II 244-246.
the freed colonies in order to regain lost markets and perhaps to place once again the agricultural economy of her former colonies under the dominance of the English merchant. Thus, although tobacco did not possess its pre-war prominence and profits were considerably lower, markets existed which kept the planter and the yeoman clinging to its stalks.\textsuperscript{4}

The post-Revolutionary interest in tobacco did not primarily come from the older regions of Virginia but from the new lands of the Piedmont which were being opened to cultivation.\textsuperscript{5} This was perhaps one of the greatest factors which hindered any form of land re-development, diversification, and improvement in the soil in the older sections. Why should a man, especially if he was young and ambitious, devote time and energy in trying to improve land which was no longer productive when land could be obtained at

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{4}Ibid., II p. 243.
\item \textsuperscript{5}Ibid., II p. 249.
\end{itemize}
a reasonable rate in the Piedmont region? This may have been one of the chief factors contributing to the agricultural lag in the state after the Revolution and accounting for prominence of tobacco until the last decades of the eighteenth century.\(^6\)

Tobacco production, although holding priority over other crops, faced some difficulties in the Piedmont regions. Transportation of tobacco was quite difficult due to the deplorable conditions of the roads. Road construction was slow, and bridges were always in need of repair.\(^7\) The construction of roads, the building of bridges, and the maintenance of ferries were left either to the counties or to private individuals to undertake the task. Poor transportation facilities hindered the movement

\(^6\)Ibid., II 66-67.

of tobacco from areas of production to ports for shipment. However, poor land transportation was a factor influencing the opening of new ports in the state. One new market developed at Georgetown, which catered to those counties bordering the Potomac River and the adjoining northern regions, which sent tobacco over land to this new center. Tobacco grown in central and southern Virginia found its way to Norfolk, which became the greatest port south of the Rappahannock River. Although on a smaller basis, both profit and production wise, this new development caused many of the older areas such as the Tidewater to lose their former prominence. A

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8 Franklin Knight (ed.), Letters on Agriculture From His Excellency George Washington President of the United States to Arthur Young, Esq. F.R.S., and Sir John Sinclair, Bart., M.P., with Statistical Tables and Other Gentlemen, on the Economy and Management of Farms in the United States (Washington: Published by the Editor, 1847), p. 44.

9 Duc de la Rochefoucauld-Laincourt, Travels Through the United States of America in the Years 1795, 1796, 1797 (London: T. Davidson, 1799), III 85.
French traveler, Duc de la Rochefoucauld-Laincourt while traveling in Virginia in 1795, noted that "Yorktown carries on no trade but the inhabitants say that forty years back it was the emporium of all Virginia."¹⁰ Similar views exist in other travel accounts which will be discussed at a later time.¹¹

Some Virginians felt that its continued priority as a staple would persist to be a leading factor in keeping the Virginia planter as well as the new nation in debt. James Madison observed that the same conditions of the planter becoming indebted to the English merchant which had existed before the war were again developing in the state. Madison felt that easy credit was a weapon used by English merchants to get planters in debt. And having accomplished this, the merchant then controlled the price paid for the tobacco. Madison stated that "...an instance of a man's getting out of debt who was once

¹⁰Ibid., III 21-22.

¹¹Refer to pages 10-13 for further discussion on travel accounts of agricultural conditions in Virginia.
in the hands of a tobacco merchant is still to be discovered." In a letter to Jefferson he related that:

The people have got in debt to the merchants who set their own prices of course... The merchant feels the inclination to his customer to be credited until he gets the burden of debt so increased that he cannot throw it off at once, he then begins to give him less for his tobacco and ends with giving him what he pleases...

Thus it was not surprising that leaders in Virginia desired a change in agricultural commodities. People were not only going into debt, but the fertile regions, which were being opened to cultivation, would suffer the same fate as that of the Tidewater region. One factor which should be noted was that while tobacco was shifting to the Piedmont region, the older sections, where it had once been the

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12 Gilpin, op. cit., II 224.
13 Ibid., II 144.
14 Refer to pages 23-49 for coverage on methods, accomplishments, and experiments of Virginia agricultural leaders.
leading staple, began to turn to the greater production of wheat and corn. 15

With the French Revolution and with the increasing difficulties between England and France, American wheat began to supplant tobacco in the last decade of the eighteenth century. 16 Most of the prominent tobacco ports in the state became leading centers for the exporting of wheat and flour. In the case of Georgetown, in not gaining the wheat and flour trade, the town lost its position to the newly developed port of Alexandria. Rochefoucauld-Leincourt stated that:

The diminution of the culture of tobacco is one of the causes for the decay of its (Georgetown's) commerce. In 1792, it exported 9,444 hogsheads and in 1796 not more than 2,641. In the same time Alexandria's exports rose from $381,242 in 1791 to $1,100,000 in 1796. 17

Norfolk's tobacco trade declined by one-third in 1791,

15 Rochefoucauld-Leincourt, op. cit., III 60.


17 Rochefoucauld-Leincourt, op. cit., III 332.
but a substantial increase in wheat and flour trade offset this loss.\textsuperscript{18} Mills sprang up in Richmond to handle large quantities of wheat from the interior, and several counties were reported to have had a considerable number of mills constructed within a few years.\textsuperscript{19} Petersburg also enjoyed considerable prosperity during these decades. It became a trade center for wheat, flour, and tobacco. However, the wheat, flour and tobacco, shipped from Petersburg were inferior to that exported from Richmond. This was attributed to vast regions of exhausted lands in the Petersburg vicinity.\textsuperscript{20} Thus grain and tobacco from this region did not gain the financial advantages of the market.\textsuperscript{21}

The war in Europe encouraged the increase in

\textsuperscript{18}Ibid., III 8-10.

\textsuperscript{19}Ibid., III 9-10.

\textsuperscript{20}Robert Hunter, Jr., Quebec to Canada in 1765-1786 ed. Louis B. Wright and Marion Tingling (Los Angeles: Anderson and Ritchie, 1943), p. 76.

\textsuperscript{21}Rochefoucauld-Laincourt, op. cit., III 108.
wheat production, and a steady market helped for some time, although a slight decline did occur in the latter half of the 1790's. The recession was only temporary, and the demand was even greater with renewed European hostilities in 1803. It may be noted that this period of decline was not, as in the case of the Revolutionary War, long enough to bring about any great changes in agricultural methods.

Demands for wheat grew from markets in the West Indies, the Spanish Peninsula, and England until the Peace Treaty in 1815. Although problems with England increased from 1800 until the eruption of hostilities in 1812, the ports of Alexandria, Richmond, and Petersburg poured great quantities of wheat and flour on the English markets.

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22 Gulpin, op. cit., p. 135.
23 Ibid., p. 161.
Despite the involvement of the United States and England in war in 1812, it did not bring an immediate end to this trade. In a one-week period approximately twenty thousand barrels of flour left Richmond; one Virginia firm estimated that over a three-month period it had exported over thirty thousand barrels.\(^{25}\) This period of agricultural prosperity, with wheat as its basis, did not last mainly because of one factor, it was based on a wartime economy.

Peace in America and in Europe led farmers back to their old methods of shifting from one crop to another. This was the same method witnessed by George Washington in 1791, when he conducted a survey of agricultural methods in northern Virginia.\(^{26}\) Washington along with many of his friends had made numerous efforts to improve agricultural practices in their section, but in his report he indicated that the pre-Revolutionary practices of planting tobacco one year and corn the

\(^{25}\) Gulpin, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 24-25.

\(^{26}\) Knight, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 16.
following one still prevailed and that farmers using manure to enhance fertility and productivity of the soil were the exception. He also noted the increasing importance of wheat, although its yield was quite low. It is of interest to note that the average yield of wheat west of the Blue Ridge Mountains was estimated at a little more than twenty bushels per acre, while east of the Blue Ridge the yield was as low as seven bushels.

Rochefoucauld-Leincourt recorded perhaps some of the best observations on agricultural conditions and methods in the state of Virginia. While traveling in the Tidewater region he remarked:

Agriculture can hardly be said to exist in Norfolk county, or in that of Princess Ann, which borders it. These

27 Ibid., p. 17.

two counties do indeed produce some
Indian corn; but the lands would, from
their nature require great attention
and labours to render them productive
of good crops.29

He also noted that the common method of rotation in
this region was "...wheat followed by Indian corn,
and then again wheat until the soil loses its
productive powers, the field is abandoned, and the
cultivator proceeds to another, which he treats and
abandons in the same manner."30

Traveling to Richmond, he was pleased to find
conditions somewhat better. Richmond, and its vicinity
to the west were found to produce better crops of
tobacco, wheat, and corn. He noted that tobacco, which
no longer grew productively in the Tidewater region
due to exhausted soil conditions, was grown in "good
quantity" along with many acres of wheat.31 Prices
for tobacco grown in the regions to the north and west


30 Ibid., III 141.

31 Ibid., III 108.
of Richmond were relatively high, and as a result of
the better productivity of the soils, wheat brought
high prices.\textsuperscript{32}

At Monticello, Rochefoucauld-Laincourt found
Thomas Jefferson "...attempting much needed reforms
in a region of generally poor farming."\textsuperscript{33} It appeared
to him that Jefferson's land had suffered considerable
abuse from his long absence and that "Its situation
renders a careful cultivation more necessary than it
required in land situated in flat and even country."\textsuperscript{34}
He observed more favorable conditions in the Charlestown
region, now in the panhandle of West Virginia. He
noted that few persons possessed more than two thousand
acres of land, but that they displayed more knowledge
in plowing and manuring the soil.\textsuperscript{35} Rochefoucauld-

\textsuperscript{32}Ibid., Although tobacco was not the chief crop
in this region, it enjoyed cultivation in areas where
soil was luxuriant.

\textsuperscript{33}Ibid., III 140.

\textsuperscript{34}Ibid., III 141.

\textsuperscript{35}Ibid., II 211.
Laincourt estimated that from twenty to twenty-five bushels of wheat were produced per acre.\(^{36}\)

William Strickland, in traveling through the state in 1800, witnessed similar findings in the mountain regions. He was pleased to observe "...fertile and beautiful valleys in which ignorant cultivators have not yet resided sufficiently long to have entirely exhausted the soil."\(^{37}\) He compared these agricultural conditions extremely favorable with the exhausted regions in Tidewater and in some of the central parts of the state. It was hard for him to visualize the profits being derived from such crops "...unless that people being actually possessed of the soil, and of the slaves to cultivate it, abandoning all exceptions of interest for their capital, look upon all as net profit that is received from the land."\(^{38}\) Strickland noted that the old ruling class had sunk with the

\(^{36}\)This appears to be Rochefoucauld-Laincourt's observation from one particular farm although he commented favorably on the entire region.

\(^{37}\)Strickland, op. cit., pp. 45-46.

\(^{38}\)Ibid., p. 49.
declining fertility to a new level of "equality of poverty" amidst the lower classes. Virginia had, in his estimation, reached "The lowest state of degradation" as far as agriculture was concerned.  

Another traveler during the period, James K. Paulding, described the land below Richmond in the lower part of Virginia, as being "...greatly injured by being planted too often without strength being sustained by the use of manure." He blamed these impoverished conditions on the great number of slaves which annually enable the owner to plant greater portions of land without regard for improving the less productive acres. John H. Craven, a resident of Albemarle County and later active in the Albemarle Agriculture Society, described the county as a "...scene of desolation that baffles description..."

39 Ibid., p. 45

40 Paulding, op. cit., pp. 96-97.

41 Ibid., p. 96.
farm after farm worn out, washed and gullied so that scarcely an acre could be found in a place fit for cultivation." Conditions were so impoverished that he felt farmers would be forced to make the choice between emigration at once or improvement without delay. "Yet these abandoned lands would still be fertile, if they were properly manured and cultivated," was the opinion of J. P. Brissot de Warville.

Much of this misfortune was blamed on the large number of poor Negro laborers. Travelers in Virginia stated that slave labor was not economical

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42 John Skinner (ed.), The American Farmer, I (Baltimore, 1825), 150.

43 Although the letter of John H. Craven expressed these impoverished conditions, he did in numerous other correspondence relate improved conditions in some of these areas.


45 Anne Royall, Sketches of History, Life, and Manners in the United States (New Haven: Printed for the Author, 1825), pp. 119-123.
and that people forced to labor would not do work comparable with that of non-slaveholding regions. Other factors too were ascribed by travelers as the causes of Virginia's low state of agricultural productiveness. The coming of the Hessian fly caused considerable concern for those with crops of wheat and corn.\textsuperscript{46} Wheat was also plagued by a type of weevil which "...infests the wheat of this state when in the straw."\textsuperscript{47}

The Richmond \textit{Enquirer} reported on August 20, 1811, that in parts of the Valley conditions were poor, and although these lands were not completely exhausted as in older parts of the state "...yet many have been run down and a few are improved."\textsuperscript{48} Numerous other accounts in the \textit{Enquirer} pointed to the poor


\textsuperscript{47} Strickland, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 46.

\textsuperscript{48} Richmond \textit{Enquirer}, August 20, 1811.
agricultural conditions in the state. In doing so the paper expressed a desire that more people would become acquainted with the problems and come forth with possible solutions to aid the sagging agricultural economy.

In light of these grim accounts, it should be noted, that these observations came from travelers and, in some cases, planters who generally did not visit the more prosperous regions of the state. The travelers were mainly from countries where land was intensively and conservatively used, where population was great and increasing, where land values were high and labor costs low, where forests were dangerously depleted, and what remained had to be carefully husbanded. The prosperous areas were, by and large, those in the wheat producing regions where rising prices were in areas where new lands were being opened to cultivation, and it was difficult for the

49 Richmond Enquirer, May 14, 1811.
traveler to reach these "out of the way" places. And consequently travelers, by and large, observed only those lands which had suffered the abuses of constant soil exhaustion rather than the more prosperous ones. Despite these drawbacks these accounts remain a valuable source of information on agricultural conditions in Virginia.

Although these accounts portray a most appalling picture, it should be emphasized that there were some people in their peregrinations who commented favorably on agricultural conditions in the state. Even some of those who reported poor conditions did not fail to comment on profitable agricultural practices. Such was the case of Richard Parkinson, who left one of the most favorable accounts of existing activities on the Eastern Shore. He wrote:

Their system of cultivation is this: If the farm consists of four hundred acres, there are always two hundred lying to what they call resting (that is without a crop) for two years; and they plant it with Indian corn, which is a preparation for wheat; and then it lies again two years to rest...for that part of America is
cultivated a farming style, they are in general what may be termed real farmers.50

Favorable remarks of this nature also came from Morris Birkbeck who reported that he found people experimenting in clearing land in the regions of the Chickahominy River and observed various agricultural experiments being conducted there.51

A number of conclusions may be drawn in this early period. Agricultural practices and crop diversification did not become a reality in Virginia until after the American Revolution due to the fact that the war had not lasted long enough to completely sever strong ties between the merchants who extended easy credit to anxious and the often impov DOUS planters. The French Revolution, Napoleonic wars, and other difficulties enhanced the great development of wheat growing which caused many areas to profit; however, agricultural conditions were generally poor. Although poor

50 Richard Parkinson, A Tour in America, in 1792, 1799, 1800 (London: T. Davidson, 1805), I 199.

51 Morris Birkbeck, Notes on a Journey in America, From the Coast of Virginia to the Territory of Illinois (London: Severn and Redington, 1815), p. 20.
agricultural conditions existed, there were people in the state who were bringing about reform and there were also regions where prosperity flourished. Farmers of the Piedmont and other areas in western Virginia displayed prosperity because "butchery" of the soil had not reached the level it had in the Tidewater region. Also there were some people in these regions beginning to practice diversification of crops and to improve their cultivation techniques.

Generally speaking, people were becoming aware of the critical situation and were willing to undertake the necessary steps to alleviate impoverished conditions. However, this was a long process, and perhaps it was not fulfilled until the twentieth century. The American Civil War has often been described as the greatest factor which ended agricultural improvement and set the South back for another fifty years in its effort for productive agriculture and stable economy.52

52 Kathleen Bruce, "Virginia Agricultural Decline to 1860: A Fallacy," Agricultural History, VI (January, 1932), 3-4.
CHAPTER II

AGRICULTURAL LEADERS AND EARLY SOCIETIES

Agricultural improvements in the last decades of the eighteenth century and the early decades of the nineteenth century were made by men from large estates, generally known for their public activities. Some of these men were responsible for the shift from tobacco to wheat. Their activities were not confined solely to experimental methods and introducing new crops, but extended to the formation of agricultural societies and the publishing of agricultural literature. Among the most prominent of these men were Washington, Jefferson, Madison, Edmund Ruffin, and John Taylor. They frequently corresponded with each other on their ideas on agriculture. A group of lesser known figures who were also important in the movement for better agricultural methods were John Binns, John H. Craven, and Thomas Mann Randolph.¹

¹ Efforts of Washington, Jefferson, Binns, and Taylor will be discussed in this chapter as they were, perhaps the most prolific of Virginia agriculturalists during this period. The omission of Edmund Ruffin and other state agriculturalists is due to the fact that although their efforts are well known, they may be generally classed with the agriculturalists of the mid 1820's and early 1830's.
Washington had early witnessed the need for agricultural progress and may be considered the leader of the movement among interested husbandmen in the state. His work in this field was begun before the Revolutionary War, and after the signing of peace, he continued with his experiments. Washington kept in close contact with Arthur Young, the leading English Agriculturalist, and the correspondence between the two revealed the closeness of their outlook. In a letter dated January, 1786, Young hailed Washington as "Brother Farmer" and offered him "men, cattle, tools, seeds, or anything else" that might contribute to his success.

The progress which Washington made was similar to that being undertaken by his contemporaries such as Jefferson and Madison. His work was concentrated along

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4 Haworth, op. cit., p. 41.
three main lines: first, more extensive cultivating of the soil by the use of better implements, and preventing soil erosion; second, an increased use of animal manure and artificial fertilizers; and third, the introducing of grass crops, not only for seed, but for cover crops as well.5

Washington tested the value of plowing both in ridges and with harrowing land level to determine which would display the more harmful effects of erosion.6 New methods and implements for cultivating land were never overlooked by Washington, and he bought new types of plows from abroad which would increase the depth of plowing as a means towards increasing fertility and controlling erosion.7


6Jared Sparks (ed.), The Writings of Washington; Being His Correspondence, Addresses, Messages, and Other Papers, Official and Private (Boston: American Stationer's Company, 1834-1837), XII 282.

7Knight, op. cit., p. 44.
Travelers in various areas of the state criticized the size of the large landed estates as being too large for careful attention. Washington was aware of this factor, and he purposely cut his holdings into smaller tracts so that they could be more closely supervised by his overseers and tenants. On the smaller tracts manures of various types were distributed. Washington held a deep interest in this and had constructed sheds for his cattle so that he might "raise manure." In every manner possible carefully controlled amounts of manure were placed on sections of land, and the results carefully noted. Not only did he and others consider manure of the utmost importance, but they experimented with artificial fertilizers such as marl, gypsum, and mud secured from river beds as well. Livestock and "raising manure" was stressed heavily by Washington, and travelers noted his improvements. Not only were cattle and sheep

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8 Refer to page 13 for an account of this type of condition observed by Rochefoucauld-Laincourt.

9Sparks, op. cit., XII 309: Brissot de Warville, loc. cit.

10Refer to page 14.
culled from his livestock, but better breeds were introduced on Washington's estate. He stated in a letter to a friend in 1794 that he hoped to furnish the neighboring communities with milk from his dairies. Along this line grasses of different kinds were planted which not only increased milk production but served as "green manure" to keep the land from eroding in the off-seasons of the year. His use of grasses as cover crops worked well in a satisfactory system of rotation which he developed. His letters exemplify the many suggestions which he related to others interested in improving their farms.

Jefferson was also one of the leading agriculturalists in the state. In his travels Rochefoucauld-Laincourt had witnessed Jefferson instituting much needed reforms in his section. He was among the first to acknowledge

11 Knight, op. cit., p. 65.


13 Refer to page 14.
the common error of exhausting the soil by the cultivation of tobacco and corn in an endless sequence. Jefferson was among leading "gentlemen" farmers to make full use of animal and vegetable manures together with artificial fertilizers. "Every particle of manure obtainable" was the first step to increased fertility. He also adopted a system of crop rotation which allowed the worn-out lands to regain fertility. Jefferson divided his cultivated lands into four farms of 180 acres each, and each farm was in turn divided into seven fields of forty acres. There were seven fields indicated in his system of rotating crops, which embraced seven years: first year, wheat; second, corn; third, peas or potatoes; fourth, vetches; fifth, wheat again; sixth,


16 Gray, op. cit., II 808.
and seventh, clover. 17 The introduction of artificial grasses was an essential part in the development of ameliorating crop rotation. Jefferson tried out lucern, chicory, succory, sanfoin, and various kinds of clover. Clover was the grass generally selected in all regions where it would grow, and it became the legume in his system. In a letter to Washington in 1790, he revealed his feelings on the use of grasses. He wrote that:

I must say a word to you about succory...you were so kind to give me some of the seed... I consider it as one of the greatest acquisitions a farmer can have. I have sowed this year about 120 acres of clover.19

Jefferson observed that the prevailing method of plowing, used by the farmers on the hillsides of Albemarle County, aided heavy rain storms to destroy the farmers' efforts by washing both soil and crops

17Ibid., II 608-809.


down the hillside. During his travels abroad Jefferson became acquainted with the European practice of horizontal and terraced plowing, and on his return to Virginia he persuaded his son-in-law, Thomas Mann Randolph, to introduce it on his farm. After successfully experimenting and noting the effective results of the hillside plow, Randolph promoted the development of the plow and highly encouraged its use in Albemarle and surrounding counties.

In his study of agriculture, Jefferson was thorough, even to the extent of being meticulous, for he felt that no detail should be overlooked, if it contributed to the comfort and happiness of the people. He gave considerable attention to the culture of unusual

20 Lipscomb and Bergh, op. cit., XIV 260-267.


22 Refer to page 66 for a thorough discussion on Randolph’s hillside plow.
plants, both for their beauty and utility. His active and continuous interest in the discovery of plants, which suited the needs of the agriculturalist, was one of his most interesting and pleasing pursuits. At Monticello in 1812 some thirty-two vegetables were cultivated along with twenty-two crops and thirteen different varieties of grasses. "No occupation is as delightful to me as the culture of the earth," he said, "and no culture comparable to that of the garden." Jefferson was deeply interested in arboriculture. He eagerly promoted the culture of fig, mulberry, and sugar trees from Europe. One of his early experiments at Monticello was the cultivation of grapes for making

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24 Lipscomb and Bergh, *op. cit.* XIII 79.


wine, and he was deeply indebted for the success of this experiment to Filippo Mazzai, a Tuscan vigneron. 27

Another phase of his early agricultural activities was that of livestock. He was one of the first importers of Merino sheep from Spain, which he planned "to furnish every county with a full-blooded male ewe." 28 Jefferson held more interest in Merino sheep than in cattle as he felt more improvement was needed to be made along these lines.

Being an advocate of competent farm machinery, Jefferson became a pioneer in this field and never failed to investigate and to record his findings on new farm implements. He was the first to introduce the threshing machine in America, and he wrote to Madison stating:

My threshing machine has arrived at New York. Mr. Finckney writes me word that the original from which this


28 Lipscomb and Bergh, op. cit., XII, 389.
model is copied, threshes 150 bushels of wheat in 8 hours, with 6 horses and 5 men. ...I will thresh any grain from the Windsor bean down to the smallest. 29

This threshing machine became so widely acclaimed in Jefferson's area that most of the progressive planters ordered or had one made for their farms. 30

Another most noteworthy accomplishment of Jefferson was that of a practical plow. As early as 1788 Jefferson began to work out mathematically the shape and angle of the moldboard and to introduce the practice of having it cast entirely out of iron. 31

His object was "to secure the regular inversion of a certain depth of the surface soil with the least application of force." 32 By 1796 his new plow was in use. It received many awards, among them a medal

29 Ibid., IX 214.

30 Betts, op. cit., p. 253.

31 Ford, op. cit., IX, 133.

32 Ibid.
from the Royal Agricultural Society of the Seine.\textsuperscript{33}

Among his other mechanical accomplishments was a hemp brake which he said:

\ldots has been so long wanted by the
cultivator of hemp, that as soon as
I can speak of its effect with certainty,
I shall probably describe it anonymously
in the public papers, in order to forestall
the prevention of its use by some interloping
patentee.\textsuperscript{34}

The use of artificial fertilizers which Washington
and Jefferson had recognized as being of the utmost
importance became highly regarded during this period.
In addition to marl, gypsum, and mud from river beds,
ashes, fish, lime, common salt, pine cones and other types
of matter were used. Although the productivity of some
of these "fertilizers" may appear to be questionable,

\textsuperscript{33} Everett E. Edwards, Jefferson and
Agriculture, U. S. Department of Agriculture History
Series, VIII (Washington: Government Printing Office,
1943), 36.

\textsuperscript{34} William Elroy Curtis, The True Thomas
Jefferson's mechanical ability was highly regarded
and he was frequently consulted by inventors of
agricultural machinery.
it took years of patient experiments to prove if they had any real value. Such was the case of John Alexander Binns of Loudon County, who introduced plaster of Paris or Gypsum. Binns' experiments with gypsum began in 1784 when he first acquired a fifteen-pound lump of plaster. After grinding it, he gave some to a tenant to distribute on his corn. It was not until the second year that any difference in the harvest could be seen. After this he continued to experiment successfully with larger quantities and various types of plaster on a variety of soils and crops. Binns discovered that it was best to broadcast the plaster and roll the seed grain in it prior to planting. This practice was later adopted by others and widely used. The "use of this sand," as it was called, "produced from (his) neighbors a great deal of ridicule." Through the use of plaster


37 Ibid., pp. 16-18.
his crop yields improved so greatly that his neighbors became skeptical of the value of plaster. They thought that it would draw all the productive ability from the soil within a few years, leaving the land completely exhausted. Binns was not a person who allowed criticism to halt his experiments, and his desire to get his fellow farmers to use plaster was a great accomplishment in itself. After lengthy discussions with his neighbors, he succeeded in getting them to adopt the use of plaster in sufficient quantities to give it a fair trial. Yields of corn doubled, and wheat crops tripled and quadrupled.38

Although Binns did not feel capable of writing about his experiments and apologized for his pamphlet's lack of "scholastic style," he published *A Treatise on Practical Farming* in 1803.39 His book became so widely read that a second edition was published in 1804 which contained certificates from qualified

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persons attesting to the accuracy of Binns' statements. 40

Jefferson sent copies of the booklet to several friends in England, Sir John Sinclair and William Strickland, stating that:

It is the work of a simple farmer who by the practices advocated had been lifted from poverty to wealth and the county of Loudon changed from a land exhausted and wasted by bad husbandry into the most reproductive in Virginia. 41

Plaster became so popular and widely used that its acceptance may be attributed largely to the demand for wheat from foreign markets and by the efforts of dedicated agriculturalists to improve the impoverished soil. William Meriwether stated that the once depleted lands in Amelia County, "having more and deeper gullies than any tract of its size in the country, rose in productivity from three bushels of wheat to fifteen." 42

Basil Hall, traveling in Virginia in 1816, commented


41 Ibid., pp. 20-21.

42 American Farmer, II (1820-1821), 20.
favorably on the use of plaster and stated that it was
generally used in the Valley at a cost from $30 to $40
per ton. 43

Other areas of the state also benefited greatly from
Binns' experiments. J. B. Christian of Greenville wrote
Colonel James McDowell that:

I find my plaster comes to hand but
slowly, there are so many wanting the article
in our county that almost every wagon that hauls
down flour brings a return load of plaster for
themselves or the owner of the flour but in every
instance yet where I have bought flour I had to
engage the person I bought of plaster, and
frequently to get wagons to haul the flour have
to agree to give plaster for hauling the flour—
in that way I have to engage it as yet faster than
I can receive. 44

Later, business men in Richmond had difficulty keeping
an adequate supply, whereas in 1799 plaster imported from
Nova Scotia could not be sold for farmers in Virginia did
not realize the value of the rock. 45 In 1815 plaster

43 Basil Hall, Travels in North America, 3 vols.

44 J. B. Christian to Colonel James McDowell, January
30, 1818, in McDowell Family MSS., Alderman Library,
University of Virginia.

45 E. Anderson to Wilson Cary Nicholas, September
21, 1819, in Wilson Cary Nicholas MSS., Alderman
Library, University of Virginia.
was advertised at $15 per ton in lump form, $19 per ton if ground, or 75¢ per bushel. However, three years later prices had declined, and it was less expensive for the farmer.\(^4\) Those living in inaccessible areas found the cost of hauling more expensive than the product, and few could bear this cost.\(^47\) Farmers in lower Virginia were at first skeptical of its benefit to lands near salt water. They felt that the plaster on the land combined with the salt from the air would cause their lands to become exhausted in a short time. For lack of knowledge they

\(^4\)Richmond Enquirer, August 26, 1815: Bill for plaster, 1818, in Wilson Cary Nicholas MSS., Alderman Library, University of Virginia.

\(^47\)American Farmer, II (1820-1821), 402. Most plaster used in this period was imported, but in 1806 the Richmond Enquirer announced that deposits as good as that imported "had been discovered in the counties on the north fork of the Holston River in southwest Virginia and for from $10 to $20 per ton unground, or $2 per hundred weight ground."
failed to combine the use of plaster with clover
husbandry on the James River lands. His experiments
along these lines were successful but the practice was
not general before 1820.

John Taylor of Caroline County, known for his
ardent stand on the states rights, was an avid supporter
of Binns' *A Treatise on Practical Farming*. Taylor's
goal in agriculture was reform for profit. And on his
estate, Hazelwood, on the Rappahannock River, he began
to write a series of articles on the experiments that
he conducted. These experiments were published in a
Georgetown newspaper and later reprinted in book form
under the title *Arator* (1814). The book was widely
read, and letters in the *American Farmer* revealed that

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48 *American Farmer*, I (1819-1820), 34-35.
49 Edmund Ruffin (ed.), *Farmer's Register*, I
(Selbanks, Virginia, 1833), 132.
50 *American Farmer*, II (1821-1822), 198.
51 Eight editions of the *Arator* were published,
and it appears to have received wide acceptance and
circulation during the period.
it "imported a new complexion to the agricultural face of lower Virginia." 52 Edmund Ruffin, writing in his Farmer's Register some years later, stated that "the agriculture of Virginia owed more to John Taylor for valuable and enduring service than to any other individual whatever." 53

Taylor was among the first to explain the main problem confronting Virginia farmers. He placed the blame of the declining fertility of the soil on the lack of using manures. 54 Taylor stated that:

It is absurd to talk of a system of agriculture without having discovered, that every such system good for anything

52 American Farmer, I (1819-1820), 78.

53 Farmer's Register, II (1834), 12-14: It is of interest to note that Edmund Ruffin did not find Taylor's system adaptable to his own lands. He later obtained the idea of soil acidity from Humphrey Davy's, Lectures on Agricultural Chemistry and in 1818, he began his experiments with marl. Ruffin hoped that it would alleviate possible acidity in his lands and thus make the use of organic manures beneficial. His speculation was correct and he became a successful user and publicizer of calcareous manures.

54 Taylor, op. cit., pp. 11-12, 14.
must be bottomed upon fertility. Before, therefore, we launch into any system, we must learn how to enrich our lands.55

As a proponent of plaster who believed that it was a decomposer rather than a manure, Taylor bought ninety-four tons of it on one occasion; the whole cargo of a ship, which had come to his wharf, at a cost of $80 per ton.56 Taylor's program for agricultural reform began with what he called "enclosing."57 By this he meant penning the livestock and restricting them from the arable lands. Once the stock was excluded; he proposed the use of plaster on crops which would give the greatest quantity of vegetable matter for feeding or for direct return to the soils.58 The greatest source of fertility, he believed, was to be found in the atmosphere. He felt that plants alone

55Ibid., p. 56.

56Farm Book of Nicholas Cabell, Cabell Family MSS., Alderman Library, University of Virginia.

57Taylor, op. cit., pp. 76-82.

58Ibid., p. 87
could draw on this source of supply from the atmosphere and make it available for man's use or its return to the earth in the form of manure. Vegetable offal and animal manure would restore depleted soils. He felt that this was the best means of restoring the fertility to land that had been "killed by the successive blows dealt by those who pretended to cultivate it."\(^{59}\)

Despite Taylor's experiments, he did not understand the use of legumes for the increasing of nitrogen, but he did believe that red clover together with Indian corn furnished the best means toward his ends.\(^{60}\)

The crop which seemed to offer the greatest advantages for domestic use and market, and at the same time was a large producer of offal was Indian corn.\(^{61}\) Corn was not an exhauster but an improver. Taylor stated: "We seek after a vegetable proper for poor

\(^{59}\) Ibid., p. 76.

\(^{60}\) Ibid., pp. 59-68.

\(^{61}\) Ibid., pp. 87-88.
ground, it is found in corn."\textsuperscript{62} Corn furnished food both for man and beast, and its offal was abundant for the production of manure. The stocks, the blades, the shucks, and even the cobs could be used as litter for the barn yard or could be plowed under in the fields as direct manure. Corn was not the only crop used for offal, for clover was to be grown on every spot where it could be "prevailed upon to exist."\textsuperscript{63} Artificial fertilizers, such as plaster, lime, and marl, met his heartiest approval.\textsuperscript{64}

Deep plowing and turning the soil in such a way as to expose it most to the atmosphere was another agricultural policy which Taylor advised. He felt that deep plowing was a means of preserving fertility.\textsuperscript{65} Taylor was also an advocate of crop rotation for improvement of the soil but not as a substitute for

\textsuperscript{62} Betts, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 74.
\textsuperscript{63} Richmond \textit{Enquirer}, June 16, 1818.
\textsuperscript{64} American \textit{Farmer}, II (1820-1821), 31.
\textsuperscript{65} Taylor, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 150-152.
manure. He stated that "if crop rotation in any way was to crowd out the more vital things, such as the constant effort toward the production and application of manure, then it held in itself more of good."  

Taylor's influence was a definite factor in the forming of agricultural societies in the state. Early agricultural societies were formed because of the increased demands for American wheat and also because people engaged in agriculture became aware of the impoverished conditions in Virginia. Once farmers became aware of these conditions, they called for changes in agricultural practices. Those changes were the ones which men such as Washington, Jefferson, Binns, and John Taylor had long advocated. The early agricultural societies served as a means of gathering information and ideas on all methods of improvement. It distributed this knowledge not only to its membership but to all those who were seeking agricultural reform.

Even before Taylor's vision of an active  

66 Ibid., pp. 194-197.
agricultural society in the state, a group of men met in Richmond on April 7, 1810 and formed the Richmond Agricultural Society. The Secretary of the Society, George Hay, soon after the first meeting, issued a lengthy questionnaire in which the purpose of the organization was set forth. The purpose as set forth was "to collect all the practical agricultural knowledge of the country and convey it to the public in the way which may be deemed most conducive to the general welfare." Among the questions proposed for discussion were the following: the best mode of restoring worn out land, filling gullies, rotating crops in which Indian corn, wheat, and clover were included, using plaster, marl, and manure, managing the dairy and deep plowing. The Richmond Society remained active for several years, but it lost prominence toward the end.

67 Richmond Enquirer, April 9, 1810.
68 Richmond Enquirer, April 12, 16, 17, 1810.
69 Richmond Enquirer, April 16, 1810.
of the decade. Its membership apparently became interested in new and more active groups.\textsuperscript{70}

In the following year Taylor's dream of a state agricultural society became a reality.\textsuperscript{71} The Virginia Society for Promoting Agriculture was formed with a membership of 220.\textsuperscript{72} Meetings were held in Richmond, and its purpose, as stated in the constitution, declared:

Our woods have disappeared and are succeeded too generally exhausted fields and gullied hills. The land of our ancestors which nourished our infancy, and contains the bodies of our fathers must be improved or abandoned. That necessity which originally impelled us with a force not less urgent to restore the fertility of which our soil has been deprived.\textsuperscript{73}

\textsuperscript{70}It is of interest to note that the names of members of the Richmond Society appear on the membership rolls of both the Virginia Agricultural Society (1811) and the Fredericksburg Agricultural Society (1816).

\textsuperscript{71}"Agricultural Societies," \textit{Niles' Register}, XV, (Baltimore, 1818), 177.

\textsuperscript{72}Richmond \textit{Enquirer}, January 24, 1811.

\textsuperscript{73}\textit{Memos of the Society of Virginia for Promoting Agriculture} (Richmond: Shephard and Pollard, 1818), pp. 3-4.
John Taylor was elected President and an impressive list of committees included men such as John Marshall, Wilson Cary Nicholas, and Fielding Lewis.\textsuperscript{74} At meetings of the Society papers were read on such topics as hemp growing, the use of fertilizers, the proper cultivation of corn, and crop rotation.\textsuperscript{75} Members of the Society even suggested sponsoring agricultural tours for the purpose of observing and surveying methods in use in other parts of the country.\textsuperscript{76}

Although these societies which formed between 1810 and 1816 were off to a promising future, their efforts were curtailed by the signing of peace with England in 1815, and several years passed before a permanent society was organized. The society which formed and now took the lead was the Agricultural Society of Albemarle which set the pattern for other societies to follow.

\textsuperscript{74}Richmond Enquirer, February 12, 1811.

\textsuperscript{75}Richmond Enquirer, April 9, 1811.

\textsuperscript{76}Richmond Enquirer, October 15, 1811.
Thus, men of large estates were the ones who advocated agricultural reforms. Again the effects of the European conflicts had their consequence upon the state in creating a greater demand for wheat. Wheat demands led farmers to seek reforms and to practice methods which had long been accepted by leading agricultural figures. The inception of agricultural societies thus resulted from both the European conflict and from a common desire to learn better methods of increasing production. In practice the society served as an agency in gathering information on all methods and improvements and in the distribution of this information to the membership.
CHAPTER III

AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY OF ALBEMARLE

The influence of agricultural societies, which had been formed around 1810 and had begun to decline by 1816, were the basis for another wave of society forming. The second movement started around 1817 and lasted throughout the nineteenth century. Unlike the first efforts, the second one was successful and eventually led to the forming of a State Agricultural Society in 1820 and the appointing of a State Board of Agriculture in 1840.\(^1\)

Although various attempts at crop diversification, rotation, and improvements of exhausted soils had been instituted in Albemarle County, the results of these undertakings were in most cases generally confined to a few dedicated and wealthy farmers. John H. Craven, a resident of Albemarle, commented on the impoverished conditions in his county several years before the

\(^1\)The State Agricultural Society formed in 1820 was actually a reorganization of the Society which began in 1811 and had suffered a decline in membership in the last years of the decade. Suffering another period of decline in the 1820's, it again reorganized as the Virginia Central Society, and it became prosperous and well known.
Agricultural Society was formed. He described conditions as "...scene of desolation that baffles description... farm after farm worn out, washed and gullied so that scarcely an acre could be found in a place fit for cultivation." Graven's views were typical of those in Albemarle who desired to institute agricultural reform not only in the County but in all of Virginia. Thomas Jefferson wanted to "enlighten the entire country with agricultural knowledge." Thus the season was ripe for the development of an effective agricultural society, which unlike its predecessors would serve as a model and a guide for other areas to follow.

It is difficult to say who was responsible for the first meeting of the group of men who formed the Agricultural Society of Albemarle. One person may have been responsible for the first gathering or the possible influence from earlier agricultural societies in the

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2 American Farmer, I (1819-1820), 150.

state may have led to the first meeting. However, one fact stands out quite clearly; Jefferson, as early as 1811, had drawn up twelve proposals which he felt should "be essential to the forming of any agricultural society in the state."\(^4\) Jefferson's correspondence before the first meeting revealed his interest in the formation of a society in Albemarle County, but due to the fact that he was working on plans for the University of Virginia, he may have thought it best to leave the movement to younger men.\(^5\) This is not to say that he did not take an active part in the Society's formation, for his influence may be discerned quite easily in organizational matters and in later projects of the Society.

Two of Jefferson's closest contemporaries, General

\(^4\)Lipscomb and Bergh, *op. cit.* XVII 404-406.

\(^5\)Thomas Jefferson to Peter Minor, February 26, 1817, in R. F. Cabell MSS., Virginia State Library, Richmond; Thomas Jefferson to John Hartwell Cocke, March 22, 1817, *Ibid.*; Jefferson was seventy-four at the time the Agricultural Society of Albemarle was organized.
John H. Cooke of Fluvanna County and Joseph C. Cabell of Nelson County corresponded frequently with Jefferson on matters pertaining to the formation of the agricultural society.  General Cooke was quite active in agricultural matters and was considered a progressive agriculturalist and leader of reform in his county. In a letter to Jefferson, General Cooke stated his "most sincere interest" in forming an agricultural society and expressed hope that he would be called upon to assist in establishing the organization. He wrote to Jefferson that his "past experience in agriculture leads me to conceive of a society to undertake the task of reclaiming butchered lands."

Joseph C. Cabell also appears to have been very close to Jefferson and was especially active in those

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6 There are several excellent letters pertaining to the forming of the Society in the N. F. Cabell MSS., Virginia State Library, Richmond; Also the Cabell Family Papers and Lewis Family Papers, MSS., in Alderman Library, University of Virginia.

7 *American Farmer, I* (1819-1820), 314.

8 John Hartwell Cooke to Thomas Jefferson, March 22, 1817, in N. F. Cabell MSS., Virginia State Library, Richmond.
matters connected with the developing university and
the forming of the agricultural society.9 He
corresponded frequently with Jefferson, General Cocke,
and Peter Minor. Jefferson was not hesitant to call
upon Cabell for his views on matters pertaining to the
envisioned society. In one letter, Jefferson asked Cabell
if he felt that the first meeting of the new society
should take place in the spring or the fall of the year.
To this Cabell replied that "Spring is the season of the
year our hearts awaken to the call of the soil."10
Evidence lends itself to the fact that Jefferson was
the primary mover for establishing the Agricultural
Society of Albemarle, but left the task of calling the men
to others.

The group of thirty men who met on May 5, 1817
in Charlottesville consisted of residents not only from
Albemarle, which had twenty representatives, but three

9 Joseph Carrington Cabell to Thomas Jefferson,
April 18, 1817, in Cabell Family Papers, MSS., in Alderman
Library, University of Virginia.

10 Thomas Jefferson to J. C. Cabell, March 10, 1817,
Ibid.
from Nelson, two from Fluvanna, three from Orange, and
two from Louisa.\textsuperscript{11} In the assemblage were statesmen,
physicians, lawyers, and farmers. The group of men
gathered with the desire "to promote the interest of
agriculture and rural economy by organizing an agri-
cultural society."\textsuperscript{12} Among those present were familiar
names in Virginia: Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Mann
Randolph, Joseph C. Cabell, James Barbour, Gen. John
H. Cocke, and Peter Minor. Gen. Cocke was appointed
temporary chairman and Peter Minor, secretary. A
committee of five was appointed to prepare objective
rules and regulations for the government of the Society.
This was presented for consideration at the next meeting
of the society. The committee consisted of Thomas Jefferson,

\textsuperscript{11}Rodney H. True, "Minute Book of the Albemarle
Agricultural Society," Annual Report of the American
Historical Society for the Year 1918 (Washington:
Government Printing Office, 1921), p. 263: The
original Minute Book of the Agricultural Society of
Albemarle is located in the Virginia Historical Society,
Richmond.

\textsuperscript{12}\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 263-264.
James Barbour, General Cooke, and John Patterson.  

Jefferson took the initiative and drew up the objectives for the Society. He entitled them "Objectives for the Inquiry of Agriculture." The Objectives consisted of nine paragraphs which appeared to him the main reasons for forming the Society. They included: cultivation of primary staples, rotation of crops, use of implements of husbandry, calendars of work, attention to farm buildings, manures and artificial fertilizers, and reports by members of different practices of husbandry.  

Before sending these Objectives to the meeting for approval, Jefferson wrote Joseph C. Cabell and advised him on the content of the Objectives. Cabell responded favorably and expressed his sincere wishes that they would meet the approval of the membership without amendment.  

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13 Ibid., pp. 263-264.  
14 Ibid., pp. 264-265.  
At the second meeting of the Society the word amendment did not arise, and the Objectives were passed unanimously. Many of Jefferson's former objectives, which he had written in 1811, appeared in the new list.\(^\text{17}\) To Jefferson and to other members of the group, these were practical measures which needed discussion if agriculture in Virginia was to be elevated to a profitable basis. Also the thoroughness of the Objectives at Jefferson's pen show a further interest in alleviating agriculture and preventing it from falling behind advances being made in manufacturing.\(^\text{18}\) Other important measures brought forward at this meeting included the adoption of rules and regulations and the approval of the official name for the Society. It was to be known as the Agricultural Society of Albemarle.\(^\text{19}\)

\(^{16}\)True, op. cit., p. 266.

\(^{17}\)Ford, op. cit., XII 492.


\(^{19}\)True, op. cit., p. 267.
Twenty-four provisions were included in the rules and regulations. Several of these characterize the thoroughness in establishing the government for the Society. Officers elected were a president, first and second vice presidents, a treasurer, a secretary, and an assistant secretary, when necessary. Meetings were held in Charlottesville on the first day of every regular term of the Superior Court of Albemarle. However, special meetings could be called by the president.20

Three classes of membership were provided for: the first one included charter members present at the first meeting; the second group consisted of ordinary members who were to be elected under the rules; and the third class was composed of members who were distinguished citizens.21 Whenever a member was elected to the Society, it was the duty of the secretary to notify him


21Ibid., p. 267.
of his election in the following form:

On the ___ day of ___ 19__ a.b.

_____ was elected a member (or Honorary member) of the Agricultural Society of Albemarle, the Society inviting his assistance. 22

No geographical limitations were set to restrict membership, and annual dues of $5 were imposed on all ordinary members. 23 New members, either ordinary or honorary, were sponsored by two members of the Society, and a two-thirds vote of members present was necessary for admission. 24

Officers were elected by ballot, and the first election placed James Madison of Orange County as president, Thomas M. Randolph of Albemarle as first vice president, John H. Cooke of Fluvanna as second vice president, Peter Minor of Albemarle, secretary, and Isaac A. Coles of Albemarle, treasurer. 25 Since Madison was

22 Ibid., p. 268.

23 The annual dues was decreased to $2 in 1822 at the recommendation of Jefferson. However, the original $5 fee was resumed in 1827 after Jefferson's death (1826).

24 True, op. cit., pp. 268-269.

25 Ibid., p. 270; American Farmer, I (1819-1820), 262.
not present, a committee, headed by Thomas M. Randolph, was appointed to officially notify him of his election as president and to encourage his acceptance.

The letter which Randolph wrote to Madison and later sent to the Richmond Enquirer, in part read:

I have the honor to make known to you that on Tuesday the 7th Inst. at Charlottesville, a number of respectable gentlemen of Albemarle and the adjacent counties who had held a prior meeting in form with that view united themselves to constitute an Agricultural Society. Every member present felt the conviction that from your name and qualifications, all those advantages would be derived in a very high degree. 26

Madison sent a letter of acceptance which was delivered before the Society. In it he stated:

I received on the 22nd Inst. your letter of the 11th making known to me that the Agricultural Society of Albemarle had been pleased to make choice of me for its 'Honorary Head.' The high degree in which I value the objects of the institution, and the particular respect I entertain for its members, do not permit me to decline so flattering a distinction. 27

26 True, op. cit., p. 272; Thomas Mann Randolph to James Madison, October 14, 1817, in H. F. Cabell MSS., Virginia State Library, Richmond.

27 True, op. cit., pp. 272-273; American Farmer, I (1819-1820), 178; Richmond Enquirer, July 13, 1818.
Members of the Society were most pleased with the high regard which Madison placed on his being elected president. Other matters transacted at the same meeting included the appointment of members to a steering committee which outlined a definite course of action to be followed by the Society in carrying out the objects for which it was organized. A committee on accounts was also appointed and given the task of locating a suitable place for meetings. The Richmond Enquirer was chosen as the official newspaper for publishing proceedings of the Society, and later the American Farmer began publishing important notices and papers of the society. Thus after two meetings considerable progress was made. The Albemarle Society was organized, rules and regulations adopted; officers elected; and committees appointed to carry out its objectives.

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29. Many of the early papers of the Agricultural Society of Albemarle were later reprinted in the Farmer's Register and the Southern Planter.
One of the first aims of the Society, as recommended by the committee which guided the activities of the organization, was to require each member to make a report of his own practice in agriculture and rural economy. The report was to be given along with an account of what was being pursued on three or four farms in his neighborhood. Each member was instructed to relate his practices on the following points: rotation of crops, average produce of each crop per acre, number of acres under the course of cropping, quantity of land cleared yearly, number of hands, horses, and oxen employed, quantity and description of soil of the farm, number of cattle, wheat and hogs, and how animals are raised in the summer and kept in the winter. The requested list of material covered almost every phase of farming. The committee felt that a faithful report by each member would embrace a mass of information. It felt that information

30 True, op. cit., p. 273.
31 Ibid., p. 274.
of this type would contain "nearly every good
practice that had occurred to the mind of any cultivator
within the district of the Society for imitation and
most of the bad ones for avoidance."32 It was felt
that former attempts to establish agricultural societies
in the state had failed, not from a deficiency of
useful subjects to occupy its member's attention,
but from the indefinite nature of the duties placed
upon its members. Each member waited for others
to make communications, and finally a situation
arose "that what is everybody's business, is nobody's
business."33 The committee believed that the reports
were a sure method of guarding against any breakdown
in communications within the organization.

Dr. Frank Carr was one of the first members to
present his report before the Society. He was a
chartered member of the Society and had been active in
instituting agricultural reform. In his report he

32 American Farmer, I (1819-1820), 273.
33 True, op. cit., pp. 276-277.
explained his system of crop rotation and diversification, and he emphasized the importance of several practices advocated by Jefferson and John Taylor. Plaster was used heavily on his crops, and he commented on his marked yield in wheat from its successive use. Dr. Carr's cattle also received considerable attention. He provided shelter for his stock in the winter months, and he also stored an adequate supply of corn and hay to feed them throughout the cold season.34

The reports were discussed at meetings, and when measures of particular interest were brought forward, the group often adjourned to the farm of the member who was delivering the survey. This method of keeping members alert and conscious of improvements was another practice used by the Society. It also gave the men a chance to see who was making the most progress in the area. Usually the visits to a farm lasted an entire day, but in some cases they extended the visit. On a visit to the

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34 Dr. Frank Carr, "Report of His Own Practices in Agriculture and Rural Economy to the Committee of the Agriculture Society of Albemarle, May 18, 1818." in N.F. Cabell, FSS., Virginia State Library, Richmond.
farm of John H. Craven, it was decided that another
day would be devoted to observing his technique in
cutting and threshing grain. The visit to Craven's
farm was typical of those made by members to witness
new agricultural innovations. First-hand observations
were considered of more value than the long reports
by each member. This is not to say that the reports
did not receive careful attention and study, but most
members felt that the observation of what fellow
members were doing was more beneficial than merely
the discussion of the merits of someone's report.
As late as 1810, William C. Rives, then president, re-
iterated in an annual address that the Society's foundings
were based on a desire to discuss the improvements taking

35 American Farmer, XII (1830-1831), 177; True, op. cit., p. 286.

36 Farmer's Register, II (1834-1835), 225; An Article in the Farmer's Register, loc. cit., concerning
the farms of John Craven and William Meriwether stated
that, "There is no part of Virginia which presents to
the eye of a stranger such a combination of beauty and
fertility... ."
place in agriculture.\textsuperscript{37}

Although it was not an established policy of the Society to continue to require reports on agriculture progress, active members continued this practice and eagerly discussed papers presented before the group. Among the most notable of the papers were those which dealt with soil erosion, manuring for wheat, farm management, corn culture, livestock management, and hillside plowing. Not only were the papers read before the Society, but other agricultural societies in Virginia often requested copies of important findings which were mentioned in speeches and articles in several agricultural publications.\textsuperscript{38} In a letter to Thomas Mann Randolph, James Mercer Garnett

\textsuperscript{37}Farmer's Register, VIII (1840), 504-505.

\textsuperscript{38}Thomas Mann Randolph answered numerous letters in regards to his hillside plow. Other members also corresponded with people on certain agricultural practices with which they not success. The N. F. Cabell MSS., in the Virginia State Library, Richmond, contain numerous letters of this kind.
requested further information on the yields of a new variety of Mexican wheat. An article had appeared in the *American Farmer* which described some of the advantages of this variety of wheat, and Garnett was curious to ascertain the yield of Randolph's crop. 39

The *American Farmer* became the organ for the Society's publications in the 1820's and continued in this capacity until the paper's editor, John S. Skinner, was elected an honorary member of the Society. 40 One of the primary goals of the Society was to have its material published and distributed among the members...and with the aid of John S. Skinner, many farmers were better informed of the new changes in agriculture. The *Richmond Enquirer*, being the official newspaper of the Society, printed

39 *American Farmer*, IV (1822-1823), 91.

40 Edward Ruffin's *Farmer's Register* published many papers and correspondence for the Society, but no official authorization appeared in the Minute Book of the Society.
mostly material concerning its meetings and activities.

In the late 1830's the Central Gazette of Staunton and the Charlottesville Chronicle also began to print the materials of the Society. 1

In the original formation of the Society, plans were made for the giving of premiums for agricultural accomplishments. The seventeenth provision of the rules and regulations stated that:

As soon as the funds will admit the Society shall propose prizes for experiments and improvements in husbandry and the best pieces written on proposed subjects, and in order more efficiently disseminate the knowledge of useful discoveries and improvements in husbandry. The Society will from time to time publish collections as shall be made to them. To promote these views, the friends of Agriculture are invited to assist the Society with experiments and incidents in husbandry. 2

The custom of giving premiums was not an original

1 True, op. cit., pp. 286-287; Authorization of the Central Gazette of Staunton and the Charlottesville Chronicle to print material of the Society was granted in 1837.

2 True, op. cit., p. 291.
idea of the Society. In fact, the practice had its origin in Great Britain where prominent agricultural societies encouraged improvements by this means. Also the Philadelphia Society for the Promotion of Agriculture (1787) had offered premiums to its members in 1791 for improvements in field husbandry and for the best papers prepared on topics which were considered by the Society to be of a general benefit to all.

The Albemarle Society authorized the first use of premiums in 1819. Premiums of $20 and $30 were offered for the greatest production of wheat per acre and similar amounts for corn yields. The old problem of decreasing fertility led to premiums of

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44 Ibid., p. 299.

$40 and $50 for the best method of recovering "worn-out land to a more heartily state, within the powers of farmers in general by judicious culture, and the application of common and cheap manure." Upon learning of the latter premium, one member remarked that "the size of the manure pile is the measure to success in agriculture."47

According to the first stipulations concerning premiums, only members were eligible, but within several years these were extended to include any person who was engaged in agricultural improvements.48 Controversial topics were often settled by the use of premiums. One such case involved the controversy over the substitution of oxen for horses for draft purposes. It was decided that a premium of $50 would be offered "for the best experiments calculated

46 Ibid., p. 285.

47 True, op. cit., p. 283.

48 American Farmer, I (1819-1820), 272; Richmond Enquirer, November 19, 1819, August 15, 1823.
to place the subject in a satisfactory point of view.\textsuperscript{49} The winner of the premium was John S. Skinner, an honorary member of the Society and editor of the \textit{American Farmer} of the advantages and disadvantages of oxen versus horses for draft purposes not only received wide attention by Society members, but it was published in his \textit{American Farmer} and later in the \textit{Farmer's Register}.\textsuperscript{50}

The plow was a subject of special patronage by the Society. This was perhaps due to its chief promoter, Thomas Jefferson. The interest of Jefferson was reinforced by the fact that his son-in-law, Thomas Mann Randolph, had designed a special type of plow for use in "horizontal" or hillside plowing.\textsuperscript{51} Randolph developed horizontal plowing to prevent soil erosion. Jefferson surely had a leading hand in

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{49} True, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 286.

\textsuperscript{50} \textit{American Farmer}, IV (1822-1823), 73: \textit{Farmer's Register}, V (1837-1838), 444.

\textsuperscript{51} Today, horizontal plowing is termed contour plowing.
\end{footnotes}
developing the plow with which Randolph gained his fame.52 A complete picture of horizontal plowing and bedding as practiced by Randolph was related in a letter to Tristram Dalton. Jefferson stated that:

A method of ploughing our hillsides horizontally, introduced into this most hilly part of our country by Col. T. M. Randolph, my son-in-law, may be worth mention to you. He practiced it a dozen or 15 years, and it's advantages were so immediately observed that it has already become very general and has entirely changed and renovated the face of our country.53

Several articles by Randolph in the American Farmer and in the Richmond Enquirer received wide acceptance and brought increased prestige to the Albemarle Society.54 In 1822 the Society awarded him a "piece of plate with an appropriate device and inscription" for his service to agriculture.55


53Ford, op. cit., XII 56-57.

54American Farmer, II (1820-1821), 106,357: Richmond Enquirer, August 17, 1821.

55True, op. cit., p. 299.
The Society also introduced a new premium of $30 for "the best improved and constructed plough for three horses." Several other premiums were added for improvements in farm machinery, and the list grew in the years as the Society prospered.56

The increased interest in farm implements also led to the establishing of a small factory in Charlottesville. It was felt that:

...for the purpose of carrying into effect the views of the Society with regard to implements of Husbandry, it is expedient to establish a manufactory of such, to be in part under the patronage and guidance of the Society.57

Several committees were formed to engage suitable persons to undertake the task of operating the plant. Members living near Charlottesville were pledged to purchase their stock of implements, which were sold at a reasonable rate, from the factory.58

56 Ibid., pp. 299-300.

57 Ibid., pp. 280-281; Richmond Enquirer, April 24, 1813.

58 Richmond Enquirer, April 24, 1813.
The plant served as a machinery headquarters for the Society, and all new or improved implements were placed on deposit at the manufactory to be studied and duplicated when advisable. A special report of the Society read:

> It is the duty of every member of this Society, upon the discovery of any new or the acquisition of an improved implement, to deposit a model thereof in the said manufactory for the inspection and information of the Society and the general public.\(^59\)

Although the manufactory was specifically established for members, the general public was invited to participate in this innovation. The Richmond Enquirer stated that the manufactory would surely "render a needed service to all for many years to come."\(^60\)

A nursery was also established in Charlottesville in the vicinity of the plant. Members living in the vicinity of Charlottesville were eager to get the

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\(^59\) *American Farmer*, II (1820-1821), 161.

\(^60\) *Richmond Enquirer*, May 15, 1819.
The nursery provided members and local citizens with a wide variety of approved fruit trees and vegetable plants. The American Farmer served as the advertising agent for the nursery, and several articles appeared requesting new varieties of fruit trees and plants. Response to the advertisements resulted in greatly improving the nursery. The Society was careful to send letters of thanks to those people contributing to the nursery and included in the letter a note that the donor was always welcome to call upon the Society for any needs.

The pursuits of the Albemarle Society in improving implements and in arboriculture became well known throughout the state. On a joint field trip,


62 Several members of the Society wrote lengthy articles on the different fruit trees in the nursery. These articles appeared in the American Farmer.

63 American Farmer, III (1821-1822), 211.

64 True, op. cit., pp. 296-297.

members of the Agricultural Society of Surry County and the Fredericksburg Agricultural Society made a careful study of the activities of the Albemarle Society.\textsuperscript{66} James M. Garnett, president of the Fredericksburg Society, reported after the trip that no other society in the entire state could boast of the many accomplishments which had been made by the "gentlemen in Albemarle."\textsuperscript{67} He further commented on the benevolent nature of the Society in allowing the general public to take advantage of its knowledge which had been acquired through experiments, and the use of its implement factory and nursery.\textsuperscript{68}

Not only did the Society hold a keen interest in reporting on agricultural progress, but much of its interest centered on agricultural education. Jefferson's proposal for the University of Virginia had included

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{66}Fletcher, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 4-5.
\item \textsuperscript{67}Ibid., p. 12.
\item \textsuperscript{68}James Mercer Garnett to Jesse Edgington, March 3, 1832, in N. P. Cabell MSS., Virginia State Library, Richmond.
\end{enumerate}
a plan for agricultural education, but this plan for
a professorship of agriculture had been thwarted
for a lack of funds. In a letter to General Cocke,
he pointed out the merits of such instruction and
couraged Cocke to bring the matter before the Society.
It was probably due to his age that Jefferson did
not take a more personal part in this undertaking
of the organization. Rather, he conducted his
campaign by corresponding with people in all parts
of Virginia.

General Cocke was one of the first members of
the Society to promote actively the establishment of
agricultural education at the University. He
introduced the first motion for agricultural education
before the members. The motion stated that many
benefits would be derived from the establishment of

66 Honeywell, op. cit., pp. 52-56.

70 True, op. cit., p. 297.

71 Several of Cocke's letters on agricultural
education are in the N. P. Cabell MSS., Virginia State
Library, Richmond.
a professorship of agriculture and that it encouraged "all the Agricultural Societies, farmers and planters of the state to cheerfully contribute to the establishment of such universal interest." The organization appropriated $100 from the treasury to the fund for establishing the professorship.

The Albemarle Society was not the only society to take part in the fund raising campaign for establishing a professorship. An address by James Madison was printed and sent to other societies in Virginia. In the address, Madison requested their full cooperation in the fund raising activities. The appeal for cooperation from other societies met with enthusiastic support from the Agricultural Society of Surry County which appropriated $100 to the fund. James M. Garnett, president of the

72 True, op. cit., pp. 298-299.
73 Ibid., p. 299.
74 American Farmer, IV (1823-1824), 273.
75 Robert Stanard to James Madison, February 12, 1823, in N. F. Cabell MSS., Virginia State Library, Richmond.
Fredericksburg Society, in a letter to the Albemarle Society gave his heartiest approval and pledged full support by members of his Society.  

Contributions were not only solicited from other societies but also from individuals throughout the state. To carry on the active campaign for contributions, the American Farmer, Richmond Enquirer, Central Gazette of Staunton, the Charlottesville Gazette and the Farmer's Register were among a few of the publications which contributed greatly to the project. James Barbour, who served as president of the Society for several terms, led one of the most vigorous campaigns throughout the state. His speeches appeared in the Richmond Enquirer, American Farmer, and Farmer's Register. They revealed the deep interest which he devoted to establishing agricultural education

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76 James Mercer Garnett to Agricultural Society of Albemarle, November 17, 1822, in N. P. Cabell MSS., Virginia State Library, Richmond.

77 Richmond Enquirer, June 16, 1827; American Farmer, VII (1825-1826), 289. Farmer's Register, III (1835-1836), 274.
at the University. In one of his letters to Edmund Ruffin, he stated:

"It has been a settled conviction of my mind for years, that a professorship of agriculture would elevate the science and dignity of encumbered vocations and present a rallying point for all the scattered information of the land."

In 1838 Barbour was elected president for the third time, and it was his greatest pleasure to announce that sufficient funds had been raised to establish the professorship of agriculture at the University of Virginia. The campaign for agricultural education was a long and exhausting affair, and many who were early devotees of the plan died before it became a reality. The plan, as stated in the Richmond Enquirer, established two chairs in agricultural science with lectures on subjects pertaining to agricultural chemistry. One of the first lectures,

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78 Farmer's Register, III (1835-1836), 275.
80 Richmond Enquirer, April 19, 1838.
which was delivered by Professor J. R. Rogers, concerned "agricultural chemistry and the peculiar nature and properties of soils and plants and their appropriate stimulants." 81 This lecture was delivered before one of the Society's meetings in Charlottesville on the University campus. 82 The two professors, J. R. Rogers and L. A. Dunmore, were frequently invited to speak before other agricultural societies in Virginia. 83

Although agricultural education at the University was of a limited nature, it was a step in the right direction and eventually an agricultural and mechanical college was established in 1872. The Albemarle Society could point with pride for being the prime instigator for agricultural education.

Another campaign which the Albemarle Society avidly supported was the establishment of a Board of Agriculture in Virginia. James Barbour was again

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81 True, op. cit., p. 309.
82 Ibid., pp. 309-311.
83 Farmer's Register, VIII (1840), 309.
the primary leader in the Society for the Board. \(^{64}\)

A plan was drawn up at a meeting, and it was decided that the Board of Agriculture should be composed of twelve of "the most intelligent cultivators." \(^{85}\) Once established, the Board was to collect the great mass of agricultural information, which was confined to a few, and to make it available to all citizens in all parts of the state. James Barbour headed the committee which was appointed to conduct the campaign for the creation of the State Agricultural Board. The committee resolved that:

> It is not merely the knowledge we have now but we may confidently count on its continual increase which would not fail to ensure by the communication with each other... \(^{66}\)

The campaign for this innovation not only included writing letters to other societies and giving speeches in different parts of Virginia, but

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\(^{64}\) *American Farmer*, XVII (1835-1836), 116.


it received support from newspapers and agricultural publications. Success came in 1840 when the state legislature authorized the creation of a Board of Agriculture. Twelve men were appointed to the newly created Board; James M. Garnett and Edmund Ruffin, the Tidewater district; James Barbour and Richard Sampson, the Piedmont district; Edward Watts and Nathaniel Burwell, the Valley district; and Peter H. Stiengergen and Joseph Johnson, the Trans-Alleghany district. James Barbour was elected president of the Board, and Edmund Ruffin was selected as its corresponding secretary. The state legislature received its first report from the Board in 1842. It consisted of a detailed account of Virginia agriculture. In the report were included the many changes which had been brought about in agriculture. Future plans of the Board were also


88 Farmer's Register, IX (1841), 239-240.
discussed in the report. The Board of Agriculture served as a direct representative between intellectual agriculturalists and the state legislature. Thus the state legislature was more able to deal with agriculture directly through the Board and was able to eliminate much time which had been spent on considering petitions.

One of the most energy-absorbing activities undertaken by the Albemarle Society was that of the successful development of an annual agricultural fair and exhibition. This was by no means a new attraction in Virginia, for as early as 1802, George Washington Parks Custis had begun a series of annual sheep shearings at Arlington. It was noted by one traveler in Virginia that "Mr. Custis gives an annual premium and an agricultural feast at his seat at Arlington for the best yearling lamb." Another

89Farmer's Register, X (1842), 217-218.
exhibition near Arlington in 1810 boasted a full list of premiums for specific accomplishments. Premiums were offered for the following: livestock, domestic manufactures, and "for shearing a sheep in the neatest, safest and most expeditious manner."92

Although the Albemarle Society could not claim to have sponsored the first agricultural exhibition in Virginia, it was the first agricultural society to sponsor such an event and also the first to make it an annual attraction. Premiums were offered along three different areas: agricultural implements, livestock and domestic manufactures.93 A certain amount of money was allotted for each category. The first, concerning farm implements, dealt with the plow, wheat fan, straw cutter, and wheat cradle. There was no doubt as to what the staple crop of Albemarle County was. In the livestock division, some eight premiums were offered for cattle. Two

92 True, op. cit., p. 301.
93 True, "Minute Book..." op. cit., pp. 216, 318, 327.
premiums in this category were for yokes of working oxen to be shown in a plowing contest. Six premiums were offered for horses, draft and cattle, and four were offered for swine, four for sheep, and an additional premium for the two best plowmen: one working with horses and the other with oxen. The third category of domestic manufactures held a great deal of interest, and thirteen premiums were offered in this class. Included in this class were linen cloths for shirts and sheeting, flannels, carpeting, blankets, cotton material, hosiery, hats for men and women, and other numerous items. Premiums were later extended to include wine, tobacco, corn, flax, cotton, hemp, wool, and other numerous items which were later added to the list of domestic manufactures.  

The agricultural exhibition was the most interesting activity of the year. It was usually held in the immediate vicinity of Charlottesville on the farm of a different member each year. The fair was held

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Ibid., pp. 216-217, 219, 314, 328.
either in late September or October. Several were held as late as November, but October was the general month for the event. The exhibition usually occurred in the middle of the week, on Tuesdays or Wednesdays. Considerable work was devoted to preparing this function. Pens were constructed for livestock; display counters erected; and the person on whose farm the fair was held was responsible "for food and drink for every man and beast."

Women occupied themselves by discussing their domestic manufactures, and often they criticized judges for their inability to give full appreciation for items which had often taken months to complete. The men usually passed their time by judging exhibits, showing animals, and watching demonstrations of new and improved implements. The plowing demonstration

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95 *Central Gazette* (Staunton), October 14, 1825

96 This was probably due to the distance people had to travel and probably because many wished to return home for the weekend.

97 *True, op. cit.*, p. 310.
usually drew the greatest amount of attraction. This was no doubt due to the strong influence of one of the Society's founders, Thomas Jefferson. The importance of the plow in husbandry did not vanish with his passing as his son-in-law, Thomas Mann Randolph, kept up active interest in the subject.

On one occasion Stephen McCormick's plow won top honors. The judges of the plowing contest stated that:

Stephen McCormick's plough called by his name opened a cubic square of 76 53/100 cubic inches with a power equal to 400 pounds and broke 1/4 of an acre in furrows of 70 yards long in 15 minutes with two horses.

Premiums in the plowing contest were also given for the man who managed his plow "with superior skill and gentleness." Newspapers usually gave excellent accounts of the demonstrations and commented favorably.

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98. Charlottesville Chronicle, October 15, 1834.
100. Ibid., XIX, 287.
on the entire exhibition.

The years in which the Albemarle Agricultural Society flourished were prosperous ones. From its inception in 1817, until its decline in 1842, it could boast of a long list of accomplishments. The Society was the guiding light in the founding of a professorship of agriculture at the University of Virginia and the creation of the State Board of Agriculture. It had established an implement manufactory and a nursery not only to aid its members but the surrounding counties as well. The custom of the annual fairs had its first permanent beginning with the Albemarle Society. Needless to say, the Society was the first agricultural organization in Virginia to take the work of each member seriously, for it desired to enrich the knowledge of its members in hopes that this would be conveyed to others.

There is little doubt as to why a society as prosperous as that of Albemarle faded from existence. By the year 1842, an effective State Agricultural
Society had come into commanding prominence. Also at home in Albemarle County the Hole and Corner Club, organized in 1841-1842, began to assert a competing activity. This club started with a small membership, but from its informal manner of operation it drew heavily on the more loosely organized Agricultural Society of Albemarle. The names of several prominent members of the Albemarle Society appeared along with those of new members of the Hole and Corner Club in Albemarle County.

Thus after more than three decades of service to the citizens of Albemarle, the surrounding counties, and the entire state, an institution passed from the pages of newspapers and agricultural journals. Needless to say, it was the first agricultural society in Virginia to recognize the plight of the farmer and to come forth with solutions to alleviate impoverished agricultural conditions and to place the state on the road to agricultural prosperity.

101 Charlottesvile Chronicle, November 12, 1842.
As it was noted by a traveler in Albemarle County:

There is no part of Virginia which presents to the eye of a stranger such a combination of beauty, fertility, and extensive district embracing so many good farmers, and intelligent, well educated, and public spirited men.\textsuperscript{102}

\textsuperscript{102}Farmer's Register, II (1834), 225.
COMPARATIVE VIEW OF WHEAT, CORN, AND OAT PRODUCTION FOR VIRGINIA AND SEVERAL OTHER STATES

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Average produce of wheat</th>
<th>Maize</th>
<th>Buckwheat</th>
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<td>In the state of New York</td>
<td>12 per acre</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td>Jerseys, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland</td>
<td>8 ditto</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Virginia (east of Blue Ridge)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>25 oats</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ditto (west of Ditto)</td>
<td>12</td>
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*Strickland, op. cit., p. 50.*
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