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**History of the Moss Farm of
Sand Run in Upshur County,
West Virginia**

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Disclosures & Acknowledgments

- **Disclosure:** The authors have no direct financial interests to disclose, but the first author is a relative of the current farm owners. Neither the farm owners nor any associated persons had editorial control or other restrictions on the drafting, content, or research.
- **Funding:** This project was unfunded.
- **Contributors:** The authors thank the family of John W Moss for the many interviews they gave and for unprecedented access to their extensive and well-preserved family archives. Many other individuals and institutions provided vital technical assistance. This work is dedicated in memory of EB.
- **Consent:** Unless otherwise noted, all photographs were provided by the family of John W Moss. Written informed consent for publication was obtained.

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Learning Objectives



- Identify the key historical figures in the history of the Moss Farm.
- Analyze how national and global events impacted the Moss Family and Moss Farm.
- Discuss factors that historically allowed the farm to be successful.
- Considering contemporary challenges and historical successes, determine what strengths the Moss Farm has that it may be able to utilize in its continuing transition and how this perspective informs the understanding of local agriculture in Appalachia.

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Introduction /
Methods & Materials

Overview & Sources

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Introduction

- **Late 1800s - Late 20th Century:** Moss family members held key roles in establishing and developing Sand Run, Upshur County, WV (USA)
- **Moss Farm:** established in 1903-1904, by John William "JW" Moss as a commercial agriculture production, value-added foods, and catering operation
- **Current Farm Owner (granddaughter of the farm's founder):** 2001-present has been working to restore the farm in the face of many modern challenges
- **Farm Family and Farm History:** covers several major global events, influenced by specific local factors at certain points
- **Literature Gaps:** First Appalachian multi-generational single-family farm history in the scholarly literature
- **Detailed Study:** May help development of novel contemporary economic agricultural solutions

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Methods & Materials

- **Primary sources included:**
 - non-recorded oral history interviews conducted over multiple dates,
 - primary source documents retrieved from electronic databases, and
 - family artifacts and documents, including correspondence, deeds, financial records, and photographs.
- **Handwritten primary source documents** were reviewed by a professional experienced in reading non-standard handwriting and spelling before determining the relevance of the document.
- **Limited secondary works** in local scholarship, grey literature, Project MUSE®, and JSTOR®
 - Results were limited to English language, articles, and North America.
 - Search strategies created by trained and experienced author using relevant keywords but were not peer-reviewed.
 - Inclusion criteria: article (s) was a historical and not sociology or environmentally-based scholarship, (s) focused on Appalachia, and (3) discussed farming or rural life as a major theme.
 - No formal bias assessment was carried out.
- Only qualitative data were available, and findings are summarized in unstructured narrative descriptions.

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Database Name	Owner	Location (USA)	Web Address	Date Searched
FamilySearch	Genealogical Society of Utah	Lehi, UT	familysearch.org	6-13 June 2022, 2 April and 2, 6 May 2023
Ancestry®	Ancestry	Lehi, UT	ancestry.com	13-16 February, 5 March and 2 April 2023
Find®	Ancestry	Lehi, UT	find.com	13-16 February, 5 March and 2 April 2023
Newspapers.com®	Ancestry	Lehi, UT	newspapers.com	13-16 February and 5 March 2023
American Civil War Research Database	Historical Data Systems, Inc.	Danbury, MA	cyberdata.com	30 January 2023
Library of Virginia	Library of Virginia	Richmond, VA	lv.virginia.gov	6 June 2022
West Virginia Archives and History	West Virginia Culture Center	Charleston, WV	wvculture.org/pages/csl/archives-and-history	1 February and 2 April 2023
Upshur County Public GIS Website	Upshur County Assessor's Office	Buckhannon, WV	govt.com UpshurCountyWV.com/Map	16 March 2023
Project MUSE®	Johns Hopkins University	Baltimore, MD	muse.jhu.edu	22-23 May 2023
JSTOR®	ITHAKA	New York, NY	jstor.org	22-23 May 2023
PubMed	National Center for Biotechnology Information	Bethesda, MD	pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov	22-23 May 2023
Google	Google LLC.	Mountain View, CA	google.com	19-25 July 2022, 30 January, 4 March, 27 March, 19-20 April, and 9 May 2023

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Case Presentation - Setting the Stage

Shenandoah Valley – 1793-1840s &
Migration to Northwestern Virginia – 1850-1860
Civil War – 1861-1865
Post-Civil War Era – 1865-1902


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Shenandoah Valley - 1793-1840s & Migration to Northwestern Virginia - 1850-1860

- David N Moss (1793-1871): son of Jacob and Polly Moss, head of the Moss family who migrated to Sand Run and grandfather of farm founder
- 1820 and 1830, Augusta County; 1840, Rockbridge County; possibly Rockingham County sometime between 1840-1850; 1850, Randolph County (David, wife, and children, Martha, John T, and William A Moss—father of farm founder); 1860, Upshur County—uncertain if they moved
- David and William are listed in US Census records as farmers, though William earned an income from his various commercial interests
- 1850 and 1860 Census Slave Schedules: 13 slaves owned by David and four persons who appear to be his siblings; 3 lived in Monrore County
- David and his son, William, were among the 306 from Upshur County who voted to ratify the Ordinance of Secession of Virginia, against 701 opposing it.

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Civil War - 1861-1865




- David served among the enlisted men of Captain William Wentz's Union-aligned Company B, Upshur County 133rd Militia, West Virginia State Troops, that mustered in on 16 September 1862, at Buckhannon.
- "William Moss" and "John T Moss", both of Virginia, were "citizens of the Confederacy" who were merchants and sold goods and wagon teams to the Confederate Army.
- 1862: William married Susan Hart (1840-1926) in Randolph County.

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Post-Civil War Era - 1865-1902

- William and Susan's family considered to be among the first settlers of Sand Run, the couple had three surviving daughters, and a son, John W "JW" Moss—the farm's founder
- 1870 and 1880 US Census: Moss family was living in Washington District, Upshur County, which includes Sand Run.
- 1881: William died in a horse and wagon accident at Peeltree, Barbour County.
- 1887: Susan (Hart) Moss married the Rev Isaac Clutter Ocheltree (1842-1897).




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Case Presentation - The Farm

Founding of the Farm - 1902-1922
Commercial Operations - 1922-1954
Reduced Operation and Heirship - 1954-2001
Conservation and Rebuilding - 2001-Present

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Founding of the Farm - 1902-1922



- 1903, John W Moss purchased the 153-acre and 8-pole tract on the Staunton-Parkersburg Turnpike
- 1906, Married Eda S Lantz
- 1922, Built their home on what was then 137 acres and 93 poles
- Farm buildings: a horse and livestock barn; chicken houses to accommodate at least 3,000 birds; cellar and cellar top; combination wash house, coal house, and garage, and equipment storage shed

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Commercial Operations - 1922-1954



- Operations: hog, beef cattle, poultry, sheep, fruit trees, produce, and smoked meats.
- Additional services: routine and event catering to the Moore, Kapple & Co. sawmill in Elamore, supplied decorative phlox flowers and ferns to two hospitality establishments, and bred registered American Hereford cattle, primarily of the Domino line.
- No automobile and worked the farm with horse-drawn implements
- Eager adopter of modern scientific agricultural practices, together with his two eldest sons

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Commercial Operations - 1922-1954



Moss Farm: JW, Eda, and daughters at chicken houses

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Family Life



- Sand Run School, attended by the Moss children, built on land originally part of the farm
- Three of Moss's children, three grandchildren, and other family members would enter the field of education.
- His eldest son and daughter and a granddaughter would later teach here.
- 1915, Founding members of Nay's Chapel Methodist Protestant Church
- In keeping with their love of God and beautiful literature, the Moss family used the *Book of Common Prayer* for private and public worship.

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Family Life




Adult Moss children and parents, circa early 1940s

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Economic Depression

- Personally paid many church expenses
- 1930s, Provided work-for-food opportunities to persons hard on their luck during the Great Depression
- Held large weekly Sunday lunches with persons from the Sand Run community, City of Buckhannon, and elsewhere attending



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Reduced Operation and Heirship - 1954-2001



- 1954, Moss suddenly died
- Farming operations declined
- Into the 1960s, Eda was still advising her grandchildren about farming, which they carried out for her
- 1978, Eda died
- Farm was in heirship with minimally maintained agricultural and conservation activities
- Managed by Moss's eldest son and, later, his youngest grandson

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Reduced Operation and Heirship - 1954-2001



Moss Farm, circa 1969, from Old Route 33

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Conservation and Rebuilding - 2001-Present



- 2001, Moss's granddaughter, CM Poling, and her husband, Matthew G Poling, purchased the Moss Farm from her family.
- CM Poling enjoyed visiting her grandma on the farm as a small child; Matthew had worked on the farm in his youth.
- 2001, ferns, second-generation apple trees, and gladiolus remained on the property.
- 2002, reclaiming fields; planted first produce garden.
- 2018, sheep reintroduced to the Moss Farm.
- 2020, selling produce, herbs, fruit, and chicken eggs at local farmers' market and community.

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Conservation and Rebuilding - 2001-Present

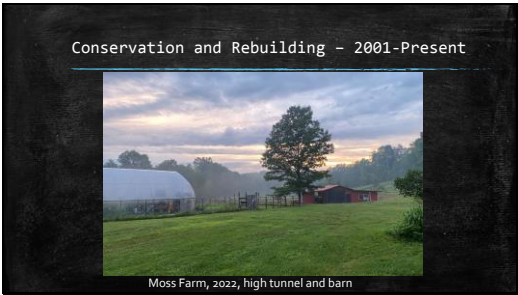


Moss Farm, 2023, current owners: Matthew G and CM Poling

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Building Major Infrastructure

- 2002, cellar stabilized; cellar top rebuilt
- 2002, natural gas and electric service connections
- 2017, municipal water service
- 2016-2017, perimeter fencing, division fencing, and livestock watering infrastructure
- 2018-2023, livestock barn (48' x 60'), with utilities, partially heated floor for lambing, studio apartment, and heavy use areas (25' x 40') at the front and back
- 2020, storage building (28' x 60') for materials and equipment
- 2021-2023, remodeled the cellar top, adding insulation, municipal water, interior design refinements, and furnishings
- 2023, new water well for high tunnel irrigation
- 2019, high tunnel (30' x 96'), with utilities and heavy use areas (30' x 22') at the front and back and
 - 2024, a second high tunnel (30' x 60')

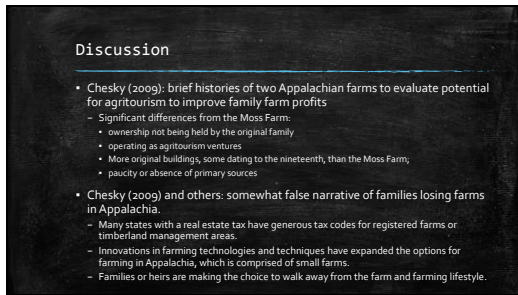
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Agency	Year	Practice
West Virginia Conservation Agency	2017	Woodland Exclusion Fence
	2017	Watering Systems
	2019	Pasture Division Fence
	2019	Irrigation Assistance
	2018	Agricultural Lime
	2019	Pasture Seeding
	2020	Pollinator Habitat
	2020	Invasive Species
	2021	Heavy Use Areas
	2023	High Tunnel Shade Cloth
Natural Resources Conservation Service	2018	Irrigation Assistance
	2020	High Tunnel, Two Heavy Use Areas, and Associated Infrastructure
	2023	High Tunnel, Two Heavy Use Areas, and Associated Infrastructure*
	2023	Water Well for Irrigation
	2023	Forest Management*
West Virginia Resource Conservation and Development Council	2022	Pollinator Seed
	2023	Cover Crop Seed

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Discussion

- Baker (2002): role of Appalachian stores and storekeepers in helping communities have connections with other areas of the country
 - As storekeepers and farmers, may explain the Moss family's strong multi-generational connections outside of Appalachia.
 - Moss family facilitated commerce within the local food communities, supporting a locally sustainable market for farmers and consumers.
- Cook (1998): subsistence farming in Wyoming County, WV
 - Families farmed to survive
 - Found a kind of independence / self-reliance
 - Concept shared by many farm families.
- Others: transition from bartering to a cash-based economy in Appalachia
 - Possibly inaccurate
 - For fair dealings, bartering, exchange of labor, and cash have always been used

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Limitations & Future Research

- Several limitations because of incomplete information on the following:
 - Anglo-European origin of the Moss family
 - Civil War occupations of family members
 - Circumstances of the family's slaveholding
 - Identities and histories of the enslaved persons held
 - Economic analysis of the historic Moss family and Moss Farm
 - Agricultural activity before founding of the Moss Farm
 - Wartime records for the Revolutionary War, War of 1812, and Civil War
- Not completing a systematic review of secondary scholarly literature according to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines
- Outside of the scope of this project:
 - Moss Family genealogies
 - Local Sand Run history
 - Natural resource development on the Moss Farm
 - Economic, cultural, and historical analyses and comparisons with farms outside of Appalachia
 - Any topic not contributing to providing a proper historical context for the Moss Farm's history
 - Any legal matters relating to the farm

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Conclusion

- David N Moss's decision to move his family to the Tygart Valley, William A Moss's community standing, JW and LL's business innovation, and CM Poling's efforts to preserve the family's farming heritage by finding solutions to contemporary challenges identify each as key figures in the history of the Moss Farm.
- Activities of Moss Family and Farm were greatly influenced by national and global events, especially early in history: Civil War, Roaring 20s, Great Depression, World War II, local economic depression caused by mechanization of coal mining, and 2020s global supply chain uncertainty.
- An informed consumer base in the immediate communities of Sand Run and Ellamore, rich natural resources, railroad, telegraph, and the Turnpike all helped the Moss Farm's early success.
- Historically, commerce was hyper-local, and centered around well-known farmers who were also community leaders. CM Poling is well-known and considered a leader within her community, and the Moss Farm continues to diversify its agricultural production. A hyper-local marketing model may help the farm find success. It's unreasonable to compete with large sellers, and other farms may wish to investigate historical marketing and purchasing trends and consider ways to adapt them to present use.

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Questions?

Thank you!

- Preprint / References: <https://www.tinyurl.com/MossFarmWV>
- Comments: research@duplastics.com
- Visit: <https://duplastics.com>
- ResearchGate:
 - https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Craig_Dufresne
 - https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Mikaela_Poling
