

Peggy and Chad Conway
Breathitt County, Kentucky
Farming in Coal Country

Eastern Kentucky is known for many things and mountaintop removal is one of them. Our need for energy has transformed innumerable acres of unique, once towering mountains. Today as we drive through eastern Kentucky it is still much like a roller coaster or riding waves in the ocean. Always moving back and forth, up and down the steep ravines that are characteristic of this unique mountain range that stretches from the southern edge of Canada to Mississippi and Alabama. Tucked away within the range are ecological niches that over time have developed into a temperate deciduous rainforest that is the most diverse in America. Underneath that diversity lies one of the most sought energy sources in history. Whole mountains once contained the power that has transformed America, and the world, over the last 200 years. In the beginning, and perhaps in some places today, coal mining was a reckless and unforgiving practice to the landscape. Miners were stripping the land and leaving mountains barren of soil or vegetation that had before preserved fragile water tables. As mountains were left barren, the minerals and compounds that were once encased with coal washed down with rain, flooding into creeks and streams. Sometimes those compounds were dangerous or poisonous like arsenic or mercury. It has only been in the last 50 years that companies have become more accountable in their practices, reclaiming the sites as grass or woodlands.

During our visit to Holliday farm, we were given a unique perspective often unheard in the heated debate about mountain top removal. Peggy and her son Chad have seen it all, through their own eyes or the stories of Peggy's Grandparents who settled the land. Their family has prospered from coal, leasing their mountains to companies since the 1970's. Though devastating to some, coal is a source of prosperity for families like the Conway's who established themselves before coal came to their region, settling large tracts that would one day be mined.

Their mountains are irrevocably changed, all four directions from their home carved into plateaus, some now growing their own grass and trees. One is still covered in chat, a fine white stone used in erosion control, while more stable grasses grow on older mountaintops. From our lookout on what their neighbors call, "the top of the world", one sees the stages a landscape goes through in recovering from strip mining. On the most recently reclaimed mountains, one can see numerous snaking ravines filled with what appears to be a fine white stone. These ravines serve as drainage ditches to divert the rains, allowing grasses and trees to grow in the stabilized soil.

Peggy realized that over the past few decades' coal companies have improved their practices considerably, "100%". She feels like they either "didn't realize or didn't care about the messes they made." Erosion was out of control in the early 1900's, but today Peggy feels they're planting trees quickly enough to replace the forest. To her, things will return if you plant them, but much was lost as we discovered how to mitigate the damage. In the meantime, she feels like lots of activist that don't want anything disturbed aren't listening that "it does grow back if you give it the opportunity, if you do the erosion control". Their farm is perhaps a testament to that, its grazing capacity grown considerably by the strip mining. Cattle has been a mainstay of the farm from the beginning, always keeping at least a few dairy cattle.

The Conway family established a homestead here around 1865 as a land patent. Its borders were established by foot, Peggy's grandfather walking the surrounding mountain tops, only stopping if the distance was great enough or if he met another homesteader's border. The acreage was once larger, it's mass dwindled through inheritance or sold by necessity. Today it is 350 acres, some of which Peggy and Chad have bought back from Peggy's brother and ex-husband as well as a recent 100 acres from a coal company. The new 100 acres is a mined mountaintop restored to grassland for cattle, like all the others that surround the farm. The homestead has changed dramatically over the years from its humble beginnings.

The main house that we see today is itself completely different from when it was finished in 1905. Built as a kind of bus stop for travelers, the home used to be a "dog trot house". It featured an open air hallway in the middle of the house, dividing both the first and second stories from each other, split right down the middle. Each of the numerous bedrooms had its own fireplace and at least two beds. People were often coming through to stay as they traveled along Hwy___, which used to be the main road to Lexington and beyond. No matter what time of day or night, neighbors from around the countryside would stop in to rest. Peggy recalls a story her father told of waking up to find strangers sleeping with him for lack of available beds.

Out the back door and down some stairs, Peggy shows us a large root cellar featuring floor to ceiling shelves. She asks us to imagine that all of this was filled with canned food of all kinds and, "that's how it was", at the height of the farm. A few steps away from the expansive root cellar is another cellar buried deeper into the ground with a covered porch on the top. It is the old ice box that her father and grandfather would fill by pulling chunks of ice from the river by mule. Filling the cellar all the way to the back, each chunk was packed with sawdust to keep the ice longer.

It's all well planned, each building leading to the other, footstep trodden paths connecting everything together. There's one big difference that Peggy points out as we stand outside, the house didn't used to be above the root cellar like it is today. Over the years, Trouble Creek which sits behind the house would flood and damage the home. With the first round of money made leasing their land to coal companies, the Conway's raised the house by six feet, exactly the height of their root cellar. A large undertaking, they now walk out of their kitchen onto the roof of the old cellar. In stages the rooftop has been converted into an addition. Many windows overlook the back yard and couches curve along the wall, a pair of Elk horns adorn the wall made of fine stained wood. Their home has undergone so many fazes of remodeling and updating that it hardly resembles the home that it was at the turn of the century.

There are some indicators that remain from the old fox trot style inn of Peggy's Grandparents. As we climb the stairs to the second floor, exterior paneling remains at the top just like it was when the breeze swept through the stairwell. In every bedroom is a large bed, all made-up, as though some traveler has reserved it ahead to arrive shortly. Quilts are the blanket of choice and we can assume that some, if not all, were made here over its long history. A loom sits waiting at the top of the stairs, an old wash bowl and mirror sit close by between bedrooms.

The early 1900's were a different time for the farm, the new road was busy and coal mines were popping up within reach. Peggy's grandmother whom settled the farm would ride horseback to nearby camps to deliver eggs, chickens, vegetables, apples or whatever they had. They also built a roadside

stand to sell to travelers and neighbors. As the farm grew they planted more apple trees, overtaking the yard extending from the back door for an acre or more. Around the house they built the facilities they needed for larger equipment and diversification like animals. Rows of small barns with sections built for specific purposes of coal, wood, kindling, chickens or tools. The stalls sit mostly empty now, the large chicken coop now quiet with a few lawn mowers in another section. Nearby is a large two-story barn built of cinder blocks, its foundation sound, the building appears as solid as it was the day it was built. Within are numerous toolboxes, equipment, feed, and large tractors with implements all accumulated over 100+ years of expansions.

Expansions like municipal water which only came 15 years before our visit. The need was imminent with Sulphur content being too high in most areas. She remarks, "People have to search for their water here". She remembers packing their drinking water from a nearby spring in the mountain, using well water only for washing. The municipal supply she has now is clean but she feels positively about the bacteria in the mountain spring water and that, "Now, you sanitize yourself to death". One of the biggest reasons that the region undertook the tremendous task of installing municipal water among the mountains was septic pollution. Peggy has been active in the local [conservation association](#)^[L1] for years and knows that people have been sending their waste water into the river. For generations people were far enough apart that the problems were isolated and remained largely unnoticed. As more people put more septic lines into the river bacteria became rampant. It was only then that a law was established that enforced creating long leech lines away from the river. It's helped, but there are still too many people along the river [to keep safe levels](#) for drinking. [When the Clean Water Act was passed Peggy was worried about enforcement but soon discovered that the local](#) agent more of [an office person](#), performing few local water tests to check on [small single family home septic lines](#). She is known to [check water samples from coal mine sites](#), keeping them accountable to EPA standards. [Nonetheless, contaminated water has](#) created a [viable](#) demand for municipal water.

Therefore, the well house like many old tools sits unused today due to developments in infrastructure and technology and a more globalized economy. From the corn mill across the road to the apples which used to expand far from the house, the farm isn't producing near the amount it used to. The mill is dusty and the orchard has been reduced to a single line nearest the back door. People used to buy whole bushels of apples from the farm during harvest, large, old fashioned and unique apples. Those same trees are large today, only some are showing signs of aging, disease appearing on their leaves in patches.

Over the years the farm has been purely, "self-sustaining", never generating enough for the expansions they needed. Be it leasing their land to coal companies or working off the farm, every generation has made extra income off-farm. Peggy's father worked as a GE repairman until he was, "old enough", to retire and farm full time. Her mother cross stitched, evident in the numerous pieces that hang throughout the home. She owned a small cross-stitching store in nearby Hazard that kept her in the social loop but generated only a small amount of income. Chad works full time for the local Extension agency, helping run the county farmers market in addition to his other duties. He's pretty sure that they could make it off the farm alone but he doesn't want to risk it while his work with Extension is so good. Peggy has spent her life as a book keeper, first for the local hospital and now for the school system 40+ hours a week. She wants to retire but has uncertainties about her insurance, whether she'll be able to pay for it with social security alone. It may be a few more years before she retires and can dedicate herself to the farm full time. Peggy hopes she isn't too tired by that time to farm and still enjoy it.

Peggy and her brothers all went to the local high school, Peggy at the top of her class. She remarks that she should have finished college, only taking a few classes towards a nursing degree. At the time she thought that, "love was all that mattered," and straight out of high school married a boy who lived a few miles down the road. Soon they had two sons, Chad and Shelby whom they raised in a beautiful cabin built ½ a mile down the road from the main house. The cabin, built on the site of an old schoolhouse, was built with money from their land leases. It's a clean two story cabin with a porch and an attached above ground pool. Today Chad lives there while Peggy lives in the main house. Over the years Peggy remarks that the pool was a popular attraction, her son's friends and family coming over throughout the summer. Peggy's family has been a corner stone for neighbors to connect for over a century, with their peak in the early 1900's, they have continued the tradition of sharing their farm with others even in small ways.

Peggy wonders what Chad and Shelby will do with the farm in the future. It has been divided so many times before that there's good cause for her concern. Both brothers are outdoorsmen with interest in the farm, but their differences in opinion have kept them apart in recent years. Shelby lives about an hour and a half away, coming to visit on weekends as he travels for church, but he always returns to the timber business he and his wife own, chipping and logging. Peggy contends that they're both hard workers, but the difference is that, "Shelby will work past dark, one day a week", where Chad will work late as many days as it takes to finish a job. Peggy has developed her life in and around the valley and wonders who else is willing to stick it out with her and carry the farm forward.

Her own brother frequently suggests that she sell the farm, moving to live closer to him on a smaller piece of land. Her in-laws even remarked that they couldn't understand why anyone would want to live there at all. For Peggy, she can't imagine leaving. She worries she'll want to go back up the long winding road to the mountain top, or step in the shop, or pick the apples behind the house just one more time. Though she estimates that only a fourth of her classmates stayed in the area, she knows all her neighbors for miles, hardly ever locking her door. Simply put, "too much roots, memories and sentiments" for Peggy to leave, and Chad feels the same way, most days. Except the Thursday before our arrival when two square bailers, a round bailer and a corn planter broke down on the same day. Perhaps that's why Peggy's mother eventually moved to Lexington while only her father retired on the farm.

Business on the farm used to be better before the highway was built that bypasses their farm, it's only the older generation who drive their route. Now the farm keeps up with the times by using platforms like Facebook to sell their produce and promote themselves. They've built up approximately 2,500 followers on their Facebook page thanks to their Farm Days event fall. Now all they have to do is post how many bushels or pounds they're selling and they'll soon be gone. From 50-100 lbs. of tomatoes, people will even order early, especially for crops like corn or the local favorite, greasy beans.

As their online presence grows, their customers are becoming younger college educated people looking for whole food. Unless they're selling in bulk, in which case it's likely to an older person who plans to can. Most times people will come to the farm to pick up their produce, Peggy or Chad occasionally meeting people in town. They've thought about setting up at farmer's markets, but it's not worth the money to pay their one worker Scotty to go, or for them to sit and wait to sell their produce. Though they admit the markets are fun and they think it could be worth it, they would need to change their business model to more beef, and include a lot more prep time. So far Chad and Peggy work on the farm

an average of 2 days a week, plus weekends. Scotty who works sometimes 7 days a week on the farm has worked on there for 13 years and shows no sign of quitting. He seems to really care about Chad and Peggy, appreciating their work ethic. He lives right down the road and works to build new high tunnels, harvest vegetables and keep up with their Cherokee purple and Indian Runner tomatoes, Big John and Greasy green beans, and peppers. With Scotty's help they can try new crops like strawberries and strive to be more organic, spot treating with chemicals thanks to his watchful eye. Though they aren't organic, they maintain the Kentucky Proud certification and Road Side Farmer Market on Facebook.

Other farmers are bringing their goods to places like Hazard and larger cities that have a greater diversity of shoppers and more economic activity. Hazard for instance hosts a hospital and a community college, both of which bring in lots of new people. Other counties like Letcher and Knott are struggling to maintain farmers market. Some counties like Perry county have strong enough economy to spread to surrounding county markets. Chad's work with the local extension keeps him in touch with the markets, as he manages those in his own county alongside his other duties as an agent. This is on top of the work he does for the farm and its Farm Days every fall. [Soon he will be hiring a full time farmers market manager to both expand their markets and allow himself the free time he needs.](#)

The Farm Days began in 2001 when Peggy's dad wanted to diversify the farm to include [goats and](#) the growing Agrotourism industry, something Peggy could handle better than large cattle. Today they host about 1,000 people per day for two weekends a year with their highest attendance at 1,400 people. It takes between 15-20 workers to operate the farm days, some people volunteering while others are paid. Five dollars at the door covers everything including pumpkin painting and hayrides where Peggy, Chad or one of their tour guides will talk about the history of the farm and coal mining in the region. The farm days were free, Chad and Peggy making money from decorations like pumpkins and corn stalks. People started suggesting they at least charge for the hay rides, saying they were the best around. They offer a petting zoo with rabbits, cows and goats but they don't offer things like live music. It's too much of a hassle and it would take away from the education about reclaimed land from coal mining and things like their goats, telling children about different cultures that eat goat's meat. As they added attractions, each a different charge, five dollars at the door made it easiest for everyone to enjoy the event. [The weather for farm days is consistently unpredictable, some years they have to serve popsicle because it's so hot, others they have to run a heater for those standing in line. People keep coming back though wanting to learn about the third generation farmstead in Eastern Kentucky.](#)

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It's hard work every year, dipping into Chad's vacation time to get the farm prepared with hay bale forts, purchasing bulk pumpkins for the pumpkin painting or preparing the corn maze. Over the years they've reduced their work by buying pumpkins instead of growing them and converting a whole field into parking. Every year Chad and Peggy both say it's the last, but they can't quit. [Though they only have the workforce to teach K-1st grade, when they see the children's reactions, hearing what they've learned, it's impossible to resist. They try to find quality staff to teach the children, like a retired school janitor who loves the kids and is used to large groups. Every year, something changes to make the weekends better and more profitable for the farm.](#)

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Agrotourism is a growing industry that remains uncommon in Eastern Kentucky, but they do have a few neighbors hosting similar farm days. So far, they haven't been much competition as the same visitors will go to all the farm days. Whether it's Holliday Farm or their neighbor White Oak Farm, people just want to get outside on a farm and enjoy the hayride. Peggy and Chad like to go to other farm days when they can, they enjoy seeing other farms and not having to work so hard.

Farm Days They used to grow their pumpkins as well as lots of holiday decorations to sell during the farm days. Nowadays they just sell mums because in recent years they haven't of the poor economy. Where people used to spend \$100-150 on decorations, now they're spending \$75. Changing their focus has been important, making sure they make enough money from the weekends to help tide over the winter. The income from the farm days has become integral to the farm, only now supplemented by a growing interest from school groups.

Chad prefers the school groups, they're easier to plan for and don't require all the preparation that full scale farm days do.

The farm offers tours to local schools and sells them produce through the Farm to School Program. They've undergone the GAP (Good Agricultural Practices) certification in order to sell from their concession stand during far days as well as selling to schools. The Farm to School Program has been active in purchasing produce as well as bringing students to the farm to learn. The children get to see the farm they'll someday be tasting corn, watermelons, tomatoes or squash from. Sometimes Chad will pick up excess vegetables from other people in the community, selling to the school for them. Many farmers don't have the equipment to process the vegetables or the desire to gain certification through the FDA.

Right now their sales to local schools is pretty low and Chad is trying different things to produce more, including mulching with black plastic. Using black plastic, he was able to grow enough watermelon to sell to the school consistently through the summer, his other produce more sporadic. He'll be using the plastic again this year in combination with their standard drip tubing through the crops. Watered with the use of a large IBC tote, it's usually Scotty who spends hours a day taking truckloads of water down to fields of melon or squash. They fertilize through those same drip lines with a water soluble solution they purchase from an Amish farmer in bulk that last months at a time. Every year is different and luckily this one has been pretty mild. Last year in July, the same Trouble Creek that used to flood their home breeched its banks and flooded their corn field, ruining the crop. It happens, and both Chad and Peggy expect it which is why they've diversified their farm so much.

Sometimes Chad feels like they've diversified too much, trying too many things at once. While they both work full time they're challenged with unique problems like feed distributors an hour away. Luckily they strategize with neighbors who use the same feed for both goats and cattle to share drive time, rotating who picks up the feed next. Meanwhile Chad's has two sons with growing interests like showing goats in FFA, diversifying their herd to include alpaca and dogs for safety. It's a lot to manage, and a contributing reason that Chad has been expanding their acreage to include more grazing land for cattle.

According to Peggy, Chad is “doing well at it”, using the acres of grassland they’ve accumulated over years of strip mining to run 40+ cattle, up from 15-20 head. Over the years while they had their own land leased to coal companies, they would lease land back from the same companies for grazing. It’s been a steady business and Chad feels like it’s something he could retire on, if prices stay high on beef. He and others are amazed at how well the cattle do on restored grassland, with the dryer climate they tend to suffer from less infections and parasites. Though it’s great rangeland, he admits it has water issues and is admittedly worthless as tillable land until more soil builds up. The water problem is only mitigated by the ponds that sit atop the mountain left by coal companies. The ponds were requested in their lease agreements, something that coal companies prefer to leave out. A liability for the companies, there’s a possibility of heavy metal and other contaminants accumulating from run off and harming humans or animals. Right now they have 400 acres of open grazing, Chad checking on the cattle weekly, bringing them new salt licks. When we drove through the fields, Peggy spotted cattle from a neighbor’s herd, unfazed she remarked that Elk will often knock down fences causing herds to drift from pasture to pasture. Between the elk and his own time constraints, Chad has stopped using rotational grazing with his cattle.

Their operation and numerous other cattle farmers are all using a University program run through local DD Ranch to keep their cattle over winter. It started because University studies showed evaporation rates in Eastern Kentucky are so slow that small scale feed lots never dry out, causing all kinds of disease issues for cattle. DD Ranch keeps cattle for the winter, allowing feedlots to grow grass and dry up while also ensuring genetic diversity through breeding programs. At the end of the winter owners either take their cattle back, or DD Ranch will sell them at auction for you.

We discover the owners of DD Ranch are related to Peggy by distant marriage, further illustrating her connections to her community. Both by law and by choice she knows most people in the region, even two people from our study, Will Bowling and Yvonn Allen. She has known Yvonn Allen her whole life, as a neighbor, a friend and a physical education teacher in school. In fact, on top of their mountain we can see Yvonn Allen’s land, easing down a distant embankment, wild horses grazing in the valley between. Will Bowling, a younger man and fellow farmer from a different county is someone she has been watching, becoming closer friends over time. She suspected that he and his wife Maggie’s farm would blossom, and it has. She thinks it’s probably because Maggie is able to work the farm full time in order to offer so much variety with such quality.

Peggy and her brothers went to the local high school, Peggy at the top of her class. She remarks that she should have finished college, only taking a few classes towards a nursing degree. At the time she thought that, “love was all that mattered,” and straight out of high school married a boy who lived a few miles down the road. Soon they had two sons, Chad and Shelby whom they raised in a beautiful cabin built ½ a mile down the road from the main house. The cabin, built on the site of an old schoolhouse, was built with money from their land leases. It’s a clean two story cabin with a porch with an above ground pool attached. Today Chad lives there while Peggy lives in the main house. Over the years Peggy remarks that the pool was a popular attraction, her son’s friends coming over throughout the summer. Their family has been a corner stone for neighbors to connect for over a century, with their peak in the early 1900’s, they have continued the tradition of sharing their farm with others.

Chad and Shelby are both outdoorsmen with interest in the farm, but their differences have kept them apart. Shelby lives about an hour and a half away, coming to visit on weekends as he travels for church, but he always returns to the timber business he and his wife own, chipping and logging. Peggy contends that they're both hard workers, but the difference is that, "Shelby will work past dark, one day a week", where Chad will work late as many days as it takes to finish a job. Peggy worries what her sons will do when she passes, whether they'll split the property again. After all, Peggy has the most living history on the land, developing her life in and around the valley.

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Farming isn't easy in this part of Kentucky. It's mountain range offering few places for farming among the steep crags, bluffs and natural bridges. The mountains are filled with beauty, so it's easy to see why so many people are against strip mining. Peggy acknowledges that a lot of people are against coal, but knows they wouldn't be where they are today without it. In fact, she doesn't know if they would be there at all. The stimulus from coal extraction has enabled them to build houses, buy land, repair damages and make investments. Investments like their high tunnel, paid for in part (75/25) by the NRCS through an infrastructure grant. In exchange, Peggy and Chad are tracking what they grow for a few years and reporting to the USDA.

The mining was completed in sections, each mountain taking about 10 years to deconstruct. Through the 70's, 80's, 90's and the last section leased from 2007-2015. The money has bought 100 acres of grazing land in the last few years and delivers them a lifestyle they're used to. Many families around them have mined coal and have prospered in the same way, accumulating tractors and equipment so that they could afford to enjoy farming. Without coal it's unclear what, if anything, would have provided such an economic stimulus to the region in the way that coal did. It passively allowed farmers to grow their operations over decades in ways that before were impossible. If their mountains had been sand, limestone, or some other less valuable stone, where would eastern Kentucky be today?

Going up the long, steep, road filled with ruts, we slowly wind our way to "the top of the world", the highest point on their property. Since the road was constructed in the 1970's when the mountain was stripped, it has had time to recover from the damage. One can see owls, hawks and other signs of a diverse ecosystem among the trees and there are wildflowers along the way. Artesian wells still spring from seemingly random points on the rock face, watering the cattle in the fields like they did decades ago. On this sunny day, the woods alive with buzzing insects and chirping birds, it can be difficult to tell where the mining occurred at all.

On the other hand, some places on their oldest mining site still don't grow anything. After 45 years of remediation, their top soil is still accumulating in sink holes down the mountainside, a clear sign of run

off from clear cutting years ago. Because of this, Peggy wants some places in Kentucky to remain untouched, as pristine as possible. Places like the Robinson Forest which has been a debate in her region for a long time, whether to mine the mountains below, or preserve the forest above. In a time of economic hardship, the park service weighed its options for keeping the park open, considering mining the coal just to keep the lights on. In the end park officials decided to mine the borders of the park, preserving as best they could the clean waters that it's known for. It is a peculiar problem for a park or a land owner, a decision that once made cannot be changed. The only options for any land owner are grassland or forest with restoration of the contour to create plateaus for grazing, deep ponds or planting. Chad has considered planting an orchard, but he's worried it would be too dry and the soil too poor for the high demands of fruit trees

Farming in Eastern Kentucky requires creativity and trying new things depending on how the land reacts. Every year the Conway's are planting new varieties and new crops, some of which will fail in their unique microclimate. Unable to grow corn in large strips like farmers from the Midwest, the Conway's have grown corn only in small plots, if at all because their fields aren't connected or large enough. It's easy to understand why Peggy's ex-husband, instead of farming, moved with the coal industry, working now in the mountains of West Virginia. The fact that the Conway's have found ways to continue farming through the changing economy and cultures is remarkable. As generations have passed, there have been times when few people were interested in their produce, only an older generation returning for the fruits and vegetables of their youth. Today, there is a resurgence happening, younger people with education are coming to them, interested in their goods. **Bridge**

There remain Eastern Kentuckians whom rarely purchase or eat fresh vegetables and as Peggy remarks, rarely drink water. Her time working in the school gave her an insight into how people use their benefits. A group of people whom Kentucky has become known for in recent decades, a culture of people who were left behind when their coal was gone. Where there was a pay check and a wage to support a family, now many turn to drugs, or hawking goods in order to sustain a life in the mountains. Some have no interest in using their SNAP or other government benefits to buy foods like Peggy and Chad produce, opting for prepared foods. Chad remarks about a recent movement in Eastern Kentucky that he saw on the news to promote "real food", fresh vegetables and fruits with whole grains. The idea was met with resistance, mostly from large agricultural companies interested in commodity foods like ConAgra. The movement was eventually shut down, despite the desperate need from many impoverished or unaware Kentuckians whose health suffers due to eating too many processed foods produced by the same companies. To Peggy, farming is about passing on knowledge of food to future generations as well as a connection to the land. Those Kentuckians who have lost contact with the land have also lost contact with the food of their ancestors.

It's clear that despite the day to day struggles they face farming, Peggy and Chad know what a gift their farm and their family history is. Unlike many modern eastern Kentuckians, at age 12 Chad was already selling vegetables to local grocery stores and only stopped at 15 to move onto bigger projects. Perhaps this disparity is part of their motivation for hosting farm days and opening their farm to school groups so they can see for themselves how rewarding farming can be. They both feel like a shift is happening as both their clientele and the demands of their clientele are changing. People are looking for more locally produced goods, heirlooms that are characteristic to the region. They're even opting for the local county fairs over the larger regional festivals, seeking their local roots and connectivity.

The Conway's are ready for that demand, being one of the oldest family farms in the area it's hard to get more local than they are. Though Peggy worries about what her sons will do when she passes, it's unlikely that the farm will ever be lost entirely.

On the cool, moist morning of our visit, the fog is still sitting in sparse patches throughout the field, the sun slowly burning through the moisture. A dog is barking as Peggy comes to the door, it's a small Dachshund dog that she keeps for her grandson. In the stillness as we sit talking on her porch, the small dog playfully jumping, time passes slowly, easily, and I can understand why Peggy will never leave.