



MEADOWLA  
ORGANIC

*Farmer-owned whole grains and stoneground flour*



# Our Mission

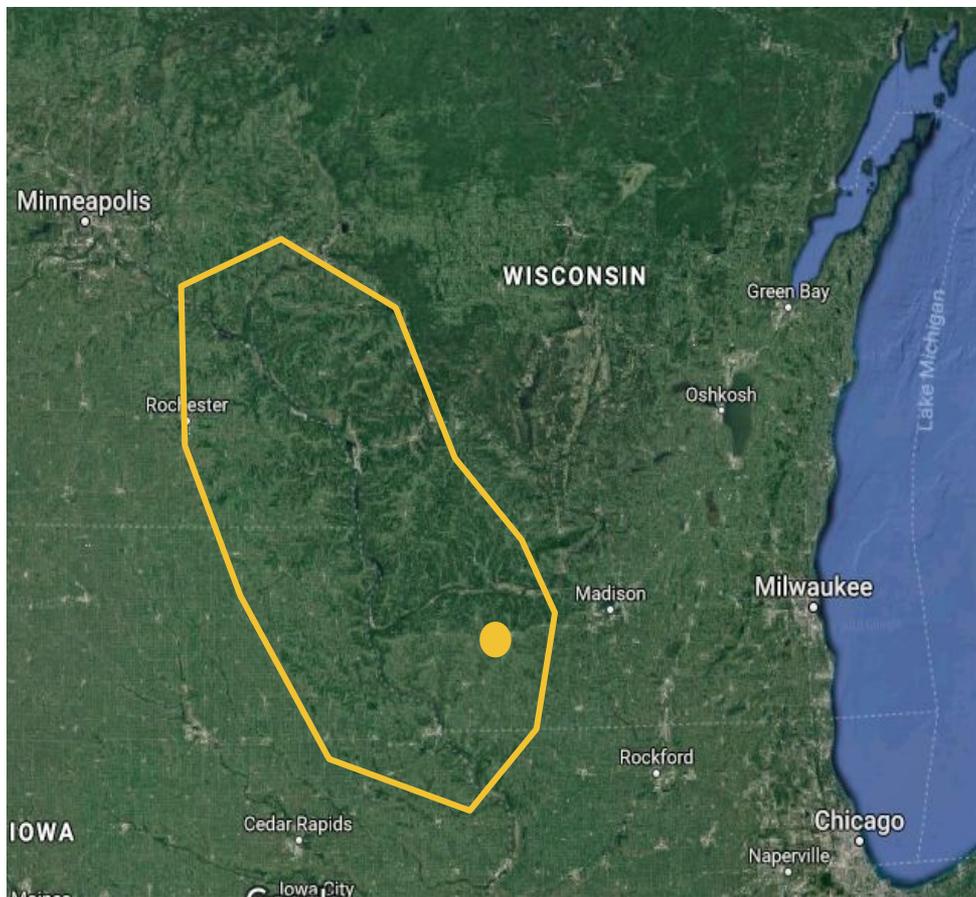


*We are farmers committed to cultivating a regenerative ecosystem by growing real food, improving the health and resilience of our soils, protecting the safety of our water, and investing in the vitality of our rural community.*



MEADOWLABS  
ORGANIC

# The Driftless



**PERENNIAL LEGUMES**



**WINTER  
WHEAT  
CORN**



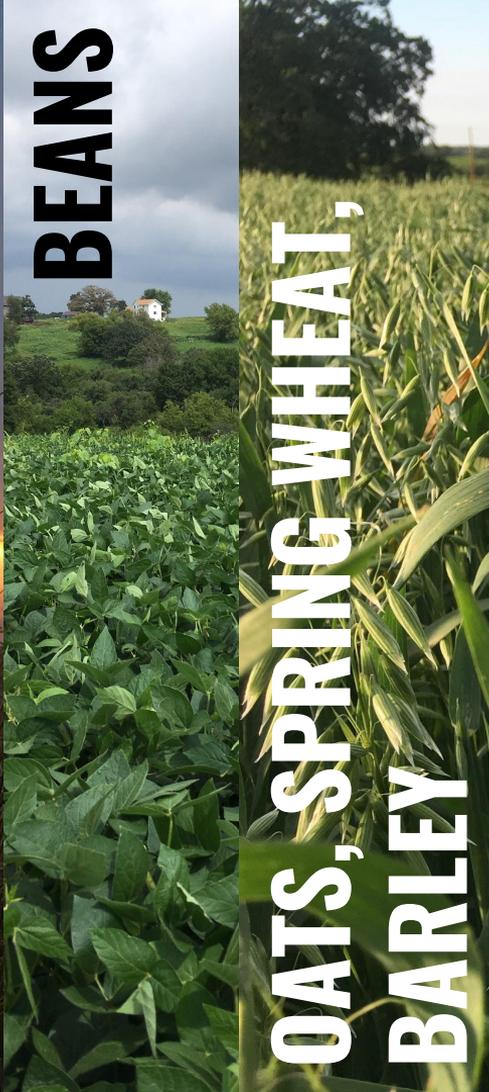
**BUCKWHEAT**



**RYE AND  
SPELT**



**BEANS**



**OATS, SPRING WHEAT,  
BARLEY**



**PASTURE**

# Our own stone ground mill



MEADOWLARK  
ORGANIC

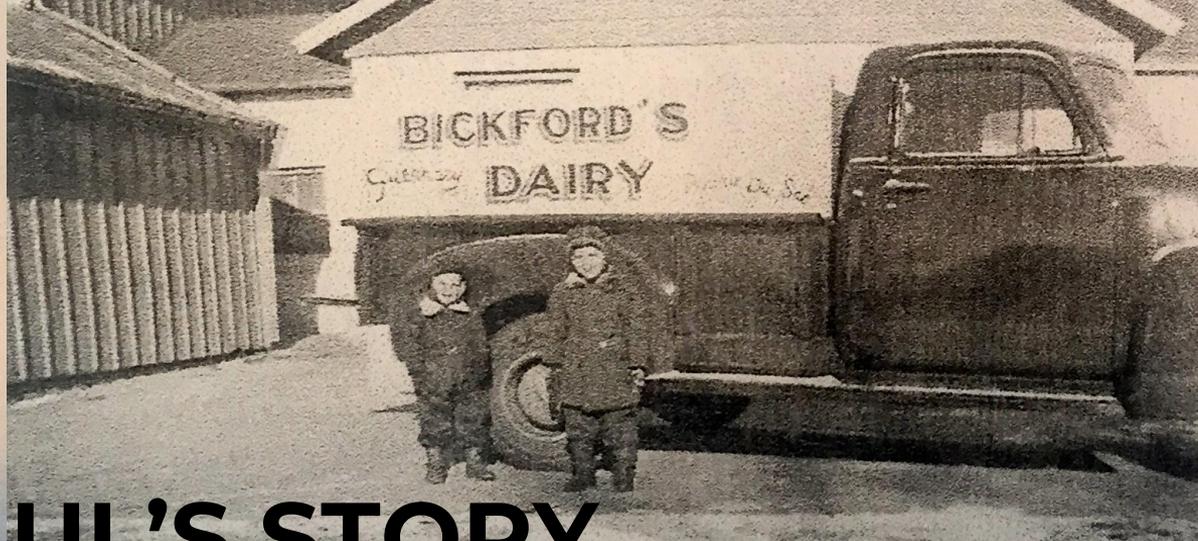
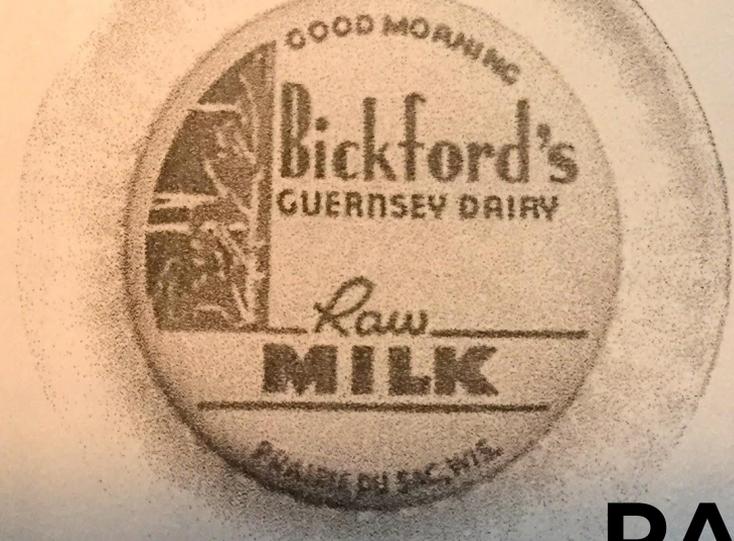
## NOW:

- USDA (VAPG and CIG) funded toll milling
- Drying, storage, cleaning, and dehulling infrastructure
- Energized customers and allies in Madison, Milwaukee, Chicago

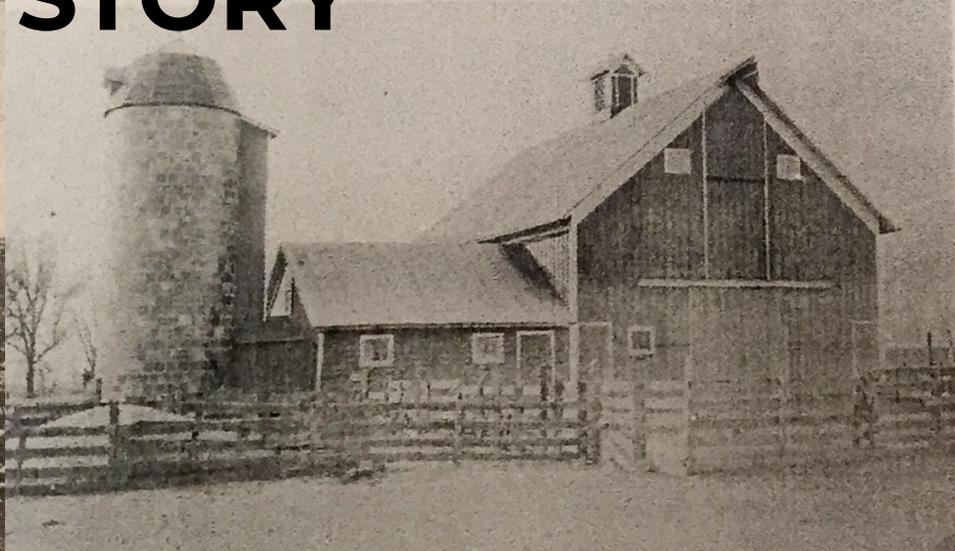
## NEXT:

- Seeking investment partners for pilot mill
- Looking for miller/partner to join operation





# PAUL'S STORY



An aerial photograph of a school campus. The image shows several large, rectangular buildings with flat roofs, interspersed with trees and paved areas. A prominent feature is a tall, cylindrical silo-like structure on the right side. The overall scene is captured from a high angle, providing a comprehensive view of the school's layout. The text "PAUL'S STORY" is centered over the middle of the image in a bold, black, sans-serif font.

**PAUL'S STORY**

An aerial photograph of a large farm complex. The central area contains several large, interconnected barns with grey and white roofs. To the right, there are two tall, cylindrical blue silos. A dirt road winds through the property, and a paved road is visible on the right side. The surrounding landscape includes green fields, a large pond in the upper left, and a dense line of trees in the upper right. The text "PAUL'S STORY" is overlaid in the center of the image.

# PAUL'S STORY



# PAUL'S STORY



# PAUL'S STORY



# PAUL'S STORY

# Paul's Story - Summary

- Home farm was in inevitable development path
- Had access to capital from his father on new farmland
- Siblings inherited home farm in Prairie du Sac
- Son Levi works on the farm
- Adaptable, not change-averse
- Started thinking about his transition out at the same age his father did
- Farm is highly leveraged, required creative thinking



# HALEE AND JOHN'S STORY



MEADOWLA  
ORGANIC





# Halee and John's Story - Summary



MEADOWLA  
ORGANIC

- John: Lancaster/Milwaukee to NYC and back to the Driftless
- Halee: AZ/TX to NYC and to the Driftless
- Previous careers as chefs/bakers
- Have no access to capital (other than through beginning farmer loans at FSA)
- Willing to invest sweat equity, work for a mentor
- John's family farm was not an option
- Committed to raising grain and grazing cattle

# Craigslist, July 1st, 2015



MEADOWLAND  
ORGANIC

I am seeking a forward-thinking individual or couple to join my 950 acre organic farming operation to assist in all facets of growing feed crops and to assist in marketing of corn, soybeans, small grains and hay.

A general background in organic practices is preferred and an ability to grasp a systems approach to management is needed. You should be knowledgeable in soil building and weed management, and general crop growing skills. Organic production requires many pieces of equipment and a mechanical aptitude is necessary. Unique marketing ideas are welcome.

Ethics and trust are a cornerstone of organic farming and are important to my operation. I want to share my 40 years of farm experience with someone who is willing to work to improve my farm. This position could evolve into a partnership or other long range business association.

Housing is available with a barn that could be used for horses or other animals. Compensation and other details will be mutually negotiated with the successful applicant. Send resume, work history, and personal message why you want to belong to the organic community.

# Transition Framework

- Leverage FSA beginning resources to achieve independent equity for Halee and John (cattle, and home farm)
- Earn/gift/purchase stock in corporation over time
- Farm business will provide pension for rest of Paul's life, funded through stock purchase/transfer, proceeds from land contract.
- Inherit remainder of stock through Paul's estate.
- Provisions will be made to protect farm in event of long term care needs, etc.
- Effectively, Halee and John become Paul's heirs: benefits and responsibilities



MEADOWLARK  
ORGANIC

**82 Acres with house and barn**



Ridgeway Pine Relict

Ridgeway

Ridgeway Lumber Co

U.S. Highway 151

Main St

**Rented land**

**Land owned by Bickford Farms Inc**

Google



# Building equity

- FSA beginning farmer real estate loan (in process)
  - 5% down, 45% loan from FSA, 50% land contract with Paul.
  - Approx \$625,000 transaction: FSA loan and land contract will be paid based on crop sales from these 82 acres, as well as income from beef enterprise
  - That property will be in John and Halee's name
- FSA beginning farmer microloan to purchase cattle and equipment (\$50,000)
- Cattle eat primarily unsaleable hay (dirty side, etc.), no/low cost, and use “free” pastures



MEADOWLA  
ORGANIC

# Accessing capital



MEADOWLA  
ORGANIC



- Like Paul did with his father, John and Halee have been able to access credit through Bickford Farms Inc.
- Bickford Farms borrowed \$275,000 to expand drying and storage infrastructure, and to construct grain cleaning and dehulling facility on farm.

# Transition Values



MEADOWLA  
ORGANIC



Mentorship

Trust

Commitment

Shared Vision

# Mentorship



- Older experienced farmers are a scarce resource, and in this particular moment, the last link to embodied knowledge of pre-chemical farming
- Paul: a lifetime of farming experience, dairy, grazing, machine skills, welding, etc.
- John and Halee: long term commitment to farming, basic machine operating skills and some animal husbandry; no welding, and no experience troubleshooting mechanical problems



MEADOWLARK  
ORGANIC

# Trust & Commitment

- We started as employees, though quickly with management responsibilities
  - Rotation, crop planning, soils program
  - Bookkeeping in 2018
  - Grants administration: VAPG and CIG
- Compensation is creative (pasture, hay, housing), based on living expenses.



# Trust & Commitment



MEADOWLA  
ORGANIC

- Paul borrowed substantially to rehab a vacant farmhouse where Halee and John now live
  - Aside from concrete, roof, electrical, all labor was performed by Wepking's family members, to limit costs
- Halee and John will repay construction loan with 82 acre purchase
- Paul's son Levi will be lifetime employee

# Shared Vision

- Shifting the practices of the farm to focus on value added food grade grains, and long diverse rotations
- Building livestock herd back to the scale appropriate for the farm.
- Open eyes to complimentary enterprises: grazing, tree crops, honey/maple/sorghum, vegetables, etc.
- Creating a flexible, adaptable, resilient farm



# Using what we've learned



- Helping an existing business evolve/improve is much more cost-effective than starting from scratch
- Be flexible about location/community
- Not enough farm kids to fill roles; non-farm kids lack some skills, but bring new perspectives
- Advocating for formal apprenticeship programs
- Not all mentorship relationships will result in farm succession
- Help create transition plans that limit debt for younger generation



MEADOWLAND  
ORGANIC