

THE PEACEABLE KINGDOM



A BEAUTIFULLY RESTORED NEWPORT FARM IS THE SITE
FOR A BOLD PROGRAM TO PROTECT AND PRESERVE
RARE AND ENDANGERED BREEDS OF FARM ANIMALS

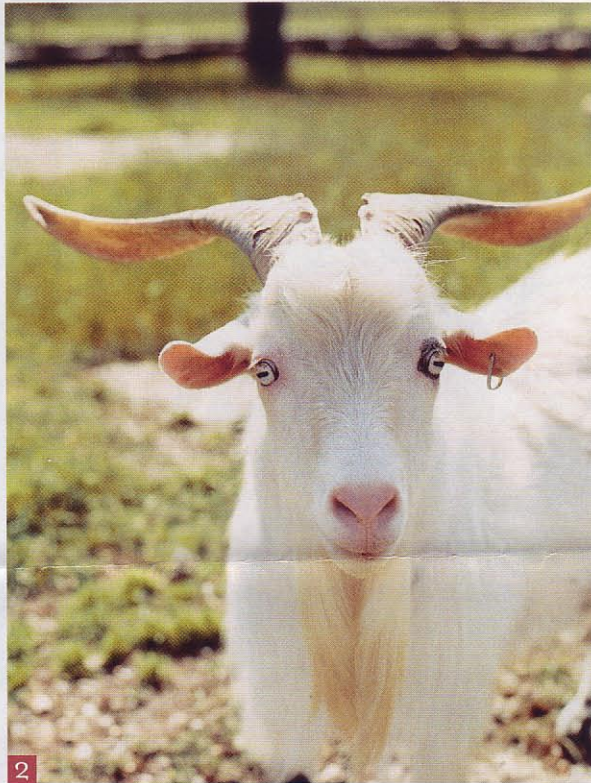
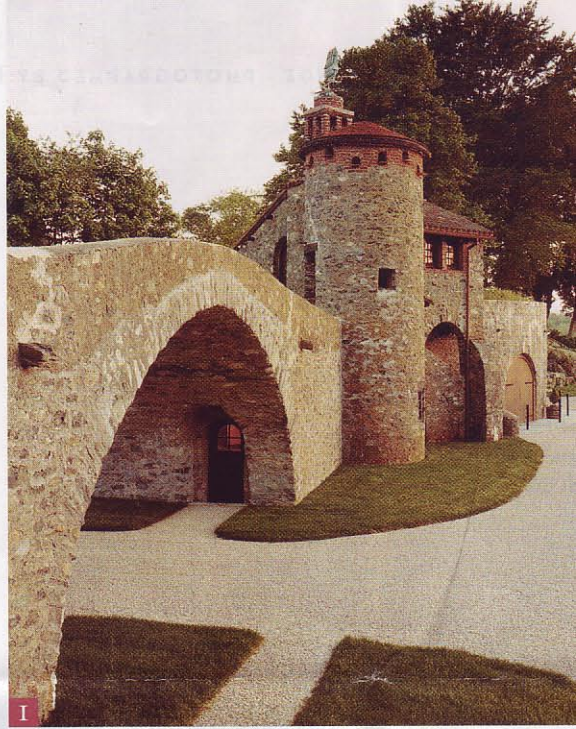
Rescuing this landmark farm was only half the battle for owner Dorrance Hamilton, opposite page; the foundation she has established here is fighting now to save our endangered farm heritage. ■ Built with stone blasted out of the hill behind, the farm buildings, this page, are of a piece with their rocky setting.



he walls are stuccoed; the roof, of cedar shingles hand-cut, then steamed and molded to give the effect of thatch. It is, far and away, the most elegant poultry house I have ever seen. Obviously, the wild hen turkey agrees: with a fake and a dodge, she slips past Joe Jones, facilities manager at Swiss Village Farm, and in through the door to captivity. Thanksgiving is coming, I reflect, but Jones assures me he will roust the interloper as soon as he finishes my tour. A wild hen cannot be allowed to interbreed with the farm's Narragansett tom turkeys.

For, like all the livestock here, the Swiss Village Farm turkeys belong to a breed once popular on American farms but now threatened with extinction. A New England favorite until the early twentieth century, the Narragansett was eventually displaced by the mammoth-breasted large white, the turkey favored by factory farms. The entire surviving population of Narragansett turkeys numbers fewer than 500, and the mongrelization of a single flock would be a serious blow to the breed's survival. Fortunately, though, Swiss Village Farm is taking steps to change that situation. Since the spring of 2002, the farm has been experimenting with a revolutionary kind of cryogenic library, one that offers a secure future for America's at-risk breeds.

Well before the new mission was undertaken, however, this was an extraordinary place. In 1916, financier Arthur Curtiss James decided that these 30 acres inside the city limits of Newport, Rhode Island, should feed his family, the 100-member staff of his adjoining estate, and the 40 crewmen on his three-masted sailing yacht. What's

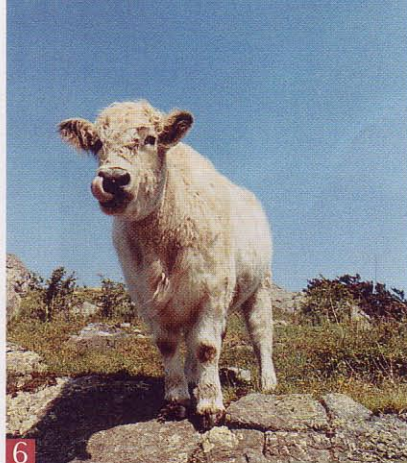


1 Acres of brush and asphalt were stripped away to restore the farm's once spacious views. **2** The Tennessee fainting goat, a genetic oddity whose future is guaranteed as part of the farm's genetic library. **3** A Narragansett tom struts his stuff behind the henner. **4** Abner, a 2-month-old Tennessee fainting goat kid. **5** Good-tempered and willing, the beautiful American Cream horse deserves a better fate than extinction. **6** Norman the steer shows off the stocky build and shaggy coat typical of hardy white Galloway cattle. **7** Who could resist this white Silkie hen, which, though not endangered, enjoys the farm's hospitality. **8** A multimillion-dollar restoration has returned Arthur Curtiss James's village to its original appearance.

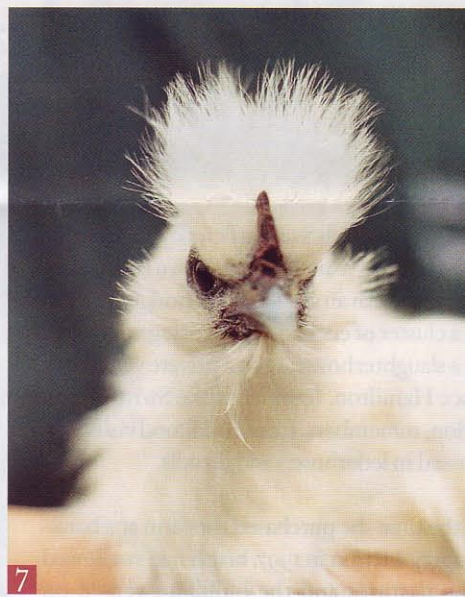




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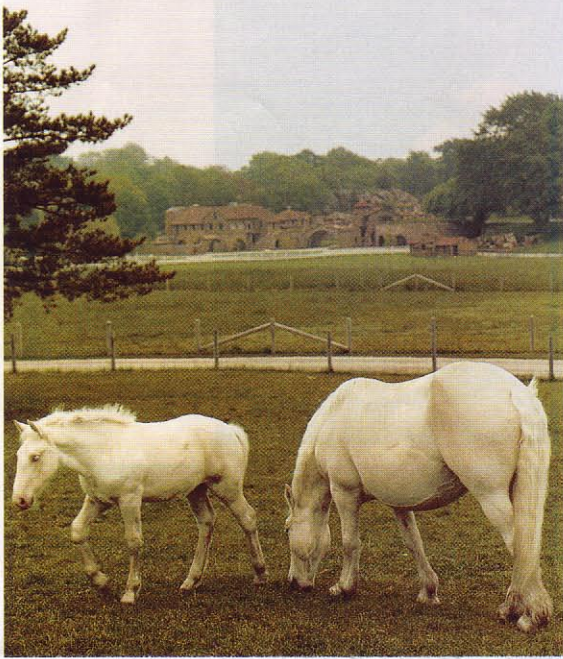
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THE RESTORATION OF THE BUILDINGS TOOK
THREE YEARS TO COMPLETE. THEIR ORIGINAL
APPEARANCE HAS BEEN RE-CREATED BOTH INDOORS
AND OUT BY CONCEALING ALL THE MODERN
UTILITIES THAT THE FARM WILL NEED TO
CARRY ON ITS HIGH-TECH RESEARCH





more, they should do so with Swiss efficiency. By blasting out the heart of a hill, he created a rough-hewn court; after framing the entrance with an arched stone bridge, he lined the space with a cluster of cuckoo-clock cottages, a stable, a barn, a dairy, a slaughterhouse, even a private veterinary clinic. Dorrance Hamilton, founder of the Swiss Village Farm Foundation, remembers, from childhood visits, the farmhands dressed in lederhosen and dirndls.

By the time she purchased the farm at a bankruptcy auction in 1997, brush had swallowed the pastures and the buildings verged on ruins. With the three-year, multimillion-dollar restoration that ensued, architects Robert T. Crane and Madison Spencer, with the help of project supervisor Peter Borden, maintained an appearance authentic to the original construction both indoors and out. At the same time, modern utilities such as underground conduits for fiber-optic cables were installed. These were essential because, in conversations with the veterinary faculty of Tufts University, Hamilton had begun to plan a high-tech future for the site.

The impetus was Hamilton's discovery of the dire state of biodiversity in American agriculture. Driven by the need for profit, modern farming has focused relentlessly on a handful of highly productive strains of livestock, such as the Narragansett's nemesis, the large white turkey. Similarly, 95 percent of our milk now derives from one breed of cow, the Holstein-Friesian, and 90 percent of our eggs come from the white leghorn chicken. As a result, hundreds of other breeds are disappearing. With them, they are taking agriculture's heritage and much of the genetic potential for its future, for preserved in the older breeds are many

An American Cream mare and her foal, above, at peace in the farm pasture. Only about 300 horses of this breed, the only draft horse native to the United States, survive.

■ **The ambience is medieval, but the cryogenic storage facility within the bridge abutment, right,**



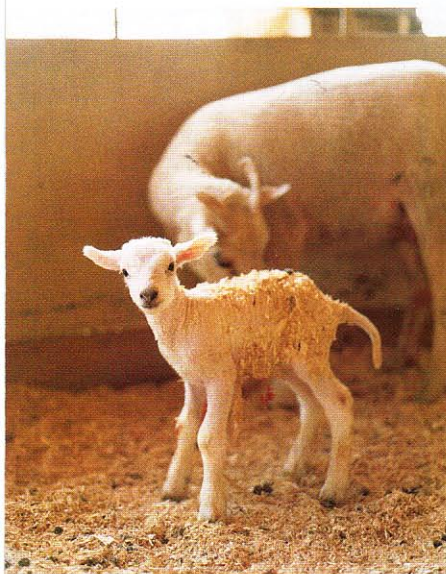
THE FARM, WITHIN THE CITY LIMITS OF NEWPORT,
WAS DESIGNED AS A **MINIATURE SWISS VILLAGE** AT
THE BEGINNING OF THE CENTURY. IN ITS NEW INCAR
IT STILL OPERATES WITH CHARMING SWISS EFFICIENCY



Only minutes old, this Gulf Coast Native lamb, below, carries in its genes a 400-year heritage worth preserving. ■ A Mille Fleur d'Uccles rooster and a Silver Seabright hen, right, share a roost. ■ To restore the henery, opposite page, project manager Peter Borden reinvented the process by which the roof was built. Cutting cedar shingles to shape, he steamed them until pliable, then formed them over molds fashioned from plastic pipe. Sources, see back of book.



ALL SORTS OF REFUGEES FROM AMERICAN AGRIBUSINESS, SUCH AS THE **TENNESSEE FAINTING GOAT**, THE NARRAGANSETT TURKEY AND THE DOMINIQUE CHICKEN, HAVE FOUND A HOME AND A FUTURE FOR THEIR BREEDS AT SWISS VILLAGE FARM



from animals imported into Florida and Louisiana by Spanish colonists, has over the centuries developed a natural resistance to internal parasites. In contrast, the sheep that are the basis of most modern flocks do not thrive unless dosed with anti-worm medicines every three months, and the existing drugs are losing their effectiveness. Could the genes of the Gulf Coast Natives, bred or spliced into the chromosomes of more commercial breeds, provide a solution? Certainly not if the last few hundred of these animals have perished.

In early 2002, Swiss Village Farm personnel flew south to acquire Gulf Coast Native breeding stock. Once established in Newport, these animals were used to produce a novel kind of harvest. Semen, eggs, embryos, blood plasma and serum, and cellular material were taken from the animals and frozen in liquid nitrogen in a laboratory that the Tufts veterinarians had installed in the former dairy. Preserved at minus 325 degrees Fahrenheit, these materials will retain their vitality indefinitely.

The livestock industry, notes Dr. George Saperstein, a leader of the Tufts team at Swiss Village Farm, has in fact been collecting and storing semen from mainstream breeds for some

the animals favored by contemporary production agriculture.

The Gulf Coast Native sheep, for example, a breed descended

time, and a handful of preservationists have a few techniques to endangered breeds. But this practice is the male half of a breed's genetic material. The intensive sampling at Swiss Village Farm preserves a cross section of the breed. As such, it ensures that otherwise lost to agriculture can be resurrected. In this library, this collection will also offer samples of material that future breeders and researchers can work on the challenges that American farming inevitably faces.

New refugees continue to find sanctuary. The San Clemente goat, a descendant of Spanish goats, came onto a California island in the sixteenth century. The samples to the bank, as is the Tennessee fainting goat, a genital anomaly causes these animals to experience a rare, harmless paralysis when startled). The turkeys and Dominique chickens must wait their turn.

This, Mrs. Hamilton believes, will come. Focusing on the banking of cattle, sheep, and goats, it has already stirred the interest of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and a variety of other institutions. In the future, all of America's endangered breeds will find a home. It may look like a toy, this mock Alpine farm, but it has always been a hardworking place. And what of the servants, and family seems likely one day to feed

