Introduction

GARDENING IN THE NEW CENTURY

There'll be tomatoes where the roses used to grow,
Potatoes where petunias used to grow.
No more sunflow'rs waving high 'til the pole beans reach the sky,
Then you'll serve a vict'ry dinner bye and bye.

. . . [R]emember as ye sow, so shall ye reap,
Come on and hoe a row and dig it deep,

Ev'ry seed is goin' to grow into victory I know
with tomatoes where the roses used to grow.

—Gilbert Mills, Ted Rolfe, and Billy Faber,
"There'll Be Tomatoes Where the Roses Used to Grow," 1945

Throughout the twentieth century, the seeds of victory were sown on farms, vacant lots, in backyards, rooftops, and window boxes. Intentionally selected, meticulously planted, and carefully harvested, these seeds provided food in times of scarcity and a political ideological focus for warring nations. While allied nations shared agricultural strategies, women across three continents shared common goals of liberation, survival, and adventure. As the U.S. and British governments used propaganda and agricultural programs to cultivate both victory and identity, national and international women's organizations promoted women's place and space within the farm labor force and society through waged farm work. Regardless of national intent and the programs participated in, women who cultivated the land during wartime not only cultivated victory, but also participated in spreading a new political and social culture of abundance focused on the production and distribution of food.[1]

For both nations, gardening was a cultural statement about national iden-

tity. For the English, ornamental gardens were part and parcel of the expression of leisure; families expressed their wealth and stature in society through the elaborate ornamental plants and design of the landscape. For many of England's elite, garden parties were the center of social gatherings, and the elaborate gardens were as much a part of their homes as the dining halls or salons. The "English garden" as it became known around the world, was a place of natural splendor where the elite took time to contemplate, socialize and, as the decades passed, even to organize reform movements. For those of lesser means and stature, gardens were the bridge between the middle class and the elite. Knowledge of ornamental gardening was seen as a genteel trait, as opposed to farm labor, which carried with it a stigma of peasant labor and strife. Thus garden training for women focused more heavily on flower cultivation and garden design rather than nutritive needs of the nation, and many saw this training as preparation for a life of leisure. Though many English women tended to kitchen gardens where they produced basic foods for their families, women's magazines and journals of the day focused on the aesthetic nature of those gardens rather than on the labor involved in them or the importance of the production of food. The national focus on these small food-based gardens began to change, however, as wartime food shortages demanded a shift away from the aesthetic to the utilitarian.

Americans shared much of the same cultural identity of their English ancestors, though the cultivation of food held both gender and racial stigmas. Built on a history of slavery, agriculture in America significantly altered Americans' perceptions about who cultivated and why. Thus, American women's sphere in gardening included ornamental plantings and landscape design much like their English counterparts. It was not uncommon for the upper classes in America to grow food, however, as many held significant orchards or owned commercial farms. Even President Andrew Jackson turned an old building left to ruins adjacent to the White House into a great orangery during his tenure in office in the 1830s to provide citrus fruits for the White House dinner table for decades to come. Full-scale food production though, held social and gendered lines of stratification: white women were often excluded from the labor of food production in efforts to maintain the roles of white men as food production leaders and the working classes, including minority men and women, as laborers. Thus training for American women focused on the ornamental rather than the utilitarian just as it did in England. Although kitchen gardens were less popular in America among the working classes than they were in England, many American women did attempt them but found little support for urban gardens outside of the aesthetic. Women's magazines and journals in America also focused on the ornamental as a

hallmark of social status and as a representation of a life of leisure for white women. Just as in England, the focus on gardening began to change as wartime food needs of the Allies signaled a new strategy for success. Although the focus did shift from the aesthetic to the utilitarian, cultural struggles ensued as traditional roles of the management of food production moved from men to women.

The cultivation of land in the first half of the twentieth century brought monumental changes in the way the Western world observed the interrelationship of women, labor, and abundance. In response to food shortages and with intense longing for change, women cultivated both victory and identity. Though this particular kind of cultivation centered on the actions of urban middle- and working-class women, the governments of the United States and Great Britain practiced their own forms of cultivating both victory and identity. Through propaganda, imagery, and educational programs focused on food and the cultivation of land, nations attempted to form national identities and achieve international victories during both the First World War and Second World War. Although some women responded to the national propaganda and official calls for change by engaging in homefront food campaigns, much of the agricultural labor women provided for their nations stemmed from a historical interest on the part of both national and international women's organizations in promoting women's place and space within both the labor force and society. This agricultural labor marked a transformation in political and social culture and in the identity of both the cultivators and those who promoted cultivation.

During the First and Second World Wars, nations sought victory by many means. Economies mobilized for war, and governments urged citizens to contribute to and sacrifice for the war in various ways. The creation of Women's Land Armies and victory gardens were just two of the various ways citizens across national borders, most especially and significantly middle-class women, were able to contribute to the war effort. The following chapters analyze the formation of these efforts, outline the key persons involved in the organization, and illustrate the lasting social, political, and cultural effects of the movements. This story, positioned at the intersection of histories of cultivation, nationalism, and the production and consumption of food, offers unique perspectives on the impact of cultivation on shaping political and personal identities during the first half of the twentieth century.

For over a century, women around the world and their governments used cultivation to create new identities that shaped not only the way women saw their role in agriculture and homefront wartime experiences, but also how nations viewed the importance of women and the cultivation of food as tools

of diplomacy. During the First World War, at a time when American women had yet to attain suffrage, the United States urged women to create war (later termed "victory") gardens in their own backyards but was not as active as other nations in persuading women to leave the home and join their nation's agricultural labor program, known as the Women's Land Army of America (WLAA). The evidence of female agricultural work in the United States showed the societal preference toward domestic gardening during wartime over formal rural occupations. Though American women participated in the cultivation of an estimated 3.5 million war gardens by 1918, approximately 15,000 women worked on farms as part of the WLAA. Undoubtedly the late entry of the United States into the war affected its homefront campaigns, though the cultivation and production of food reigned as a vital symbol in promoting both an Allied victory and an American identity as a land of abundance. The culture of abundance in turn shaped national and international identity in the interwar and postwar years as nations used food no longer as a weapon, but as a tool of diplomacy.[2]

Composed of primarily white, middle-class women, many women's political and social organizations did not accurately represent their nation's female laborers, but rather served as avenues for middle-class women to obtain careers and leadership roles. As many African American and immigrant women needed employment before either of the wars began, wartime employment did not change much for them. Many women did not seek wartime employment in agriculture but found career opportunities in industrial work, leaving domestic employment to pursue higher-paying jobs in the factories. As a result, white middle- and upper-class women were left with household management duties that included gardening, canning, and shopping. Due to the dire economic and security situations the British experienced during war, women of all races and economic classes in England had to make changes to their lifestyles as they experienced altered relationships with food. Regardless of nationality, American and British white middle-class women used the opportunity to forge new identities through new career options and forms of household management.

Britons differed from Americans in their attitudes about women's wartime roles because the British food situation differed from that of the United States. The experience of firsthand attacks on British soil promoted a stronger sense of obligation and eagerness to fight in any way they could, and, although in 1914 approximately 50 percent of the food Britain needed to maintain its population of 36 million was the result of importation, the British government and citizens alike quickly organized plans to replace agricultural workers with a team of women eager to prevent hunger caused by enemy import

blockades. As a result, British urban middle-class women responded to the national agricultural need and drove the movement of women war workers during the First World War by creating the Women's Land Army (WLA). During the war, around 80,000 British women served as nurses, cooks, ambulance drivers, or in other service roles as part of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) either on the home front or the Western Front to aid the war effort. Additionally, the British WLA attracted approximately 23,000 women seeking both adventure and opportunity to serve their country.

Casualties of the First World War included many of the social and political gains of the Progressive Era in America and the progressive movements of the Labour and Liberal Parties for the advancement of women's rights in Great Britain. The movement for women's rights and suffrage that spread across the Western world stalled due to the international wartime focus, but at the same time in many ways benefited from the opportunities women found to prove their ability to contribute economically and politically. These patriotic homefront contributions aided the movement somewhat by diminishing concerns about socialist influences in women's actions toward equality. The female workforce on the home front in both the United States and Great Britain received appreciation at the end of the war for assistance in maintaining stability during the war. Some recognition grew into political and social gains as a result of continued connections between homefront efforts and political organizations that existed before the war began. These efforts remained in the memory of political leaders in the decades to come, and when the threat of war seemed imminent a mere two decades later, nations called upon their women to contribute to the effort a second time.

In the era of the Second World War, the United States fully promoted *both* the Victory Garden and the WLAA campaigns. Due to advances in women's rights and position in labor and society as well as the advancements in technology that made industrial food production more efficient, the nation looked to women's production of food as symbolic of the abundance of America and gave soldiers a visual representation of a nation worth fighting for. At the end of the war and into the postwar era, the United States and its consumer culture attempted to utilize this socially and politically constructed wartime connection to the land and production of food to (re)domesticate women.

The Second World War marked a profound change in cultural identity for the British people. Stemming from increased air raids, shortages of food, and considerable threat to national survival, the domestic situation of England differed immensely from that in the United States. One thing that the two nations had in common, however, was the intense desire to motivate women to do all they could to help achieve victory.[3] For England, however,

the nation realized that merely creating backyard gardens or canning vegetables was not enough to sustain the nation so dependent upon agricultural imports. Importing nearly 70 percent of its food supply when it entered the war, Britain's need in the face of German blockades was great. Nonetheless, English women across class boundaries gardened in existing urban and rural plots or helped cultivate on urban land allocated for gardening as part of the Grow More Food (GMF) or "Dig For Victory" campaign. In addition to these efforts, urban middle- and working-class women of England responded to the anticipated food crisis that a second global war might bring by reestablishing the WLA three months before Britain declared war in September 1939. In the months leading to war, the British WLA acquired over 10,000 female recruits for training and service. Though accurate records are difficult to obtain because the British government eliminated records of the WLA after the end of the war, we do know that at its peak in 1945, the British WLA contained approximately 77,000 members.

Much of the interest in developing the WLAs in multiple nations stemmed from wide-scale women's organizations that held close ties with their international wartime sisters like Lady Gertrude Denman and Harriot Stanton Blatch. Lady Denman served as assistant director of the British WLA in the First World War and later as director of the British WLA in the Second World War. Before her work with the WLA, she was an international activist for women's issues and was also wife of Thomas Denman, the fifth governor-general of Australia. Lady Denman held many positions of leadership in women's organizations, both national and international, and represented a growing international exchange of progressive ideas about women's place in labor and society. Harriot Stanton Blatch, daughter of the famed American suffragist Elizabeth Cady Stanton, spent two decades in England fighting for women's equality in labor and brought her connections and ideas back to America and became the director of the WLAA in 1917. Blatch dedicated her book *Mobilizing Woman Power* to the women of Great Britain and France, realizing the importance of using foreign examples and ideas to encourage the American people to make the best use of their female workforce. Blatch argued that a WLAA, modeled on the WLA of Great Britain, would change societal expectations of spheres for women and claimed,

> But facts remain facts in spite of prejudice, and the Woman's Land Army with faith and enthusiasm in lieu of a national treasury, are endeavoring to bring woman power and the untilled fields together. The proved achievement of the individual worker will win the employer, the unit plan with its solution of housing conditions and dreary isolation will overcome not

> only the opposition of the farmer's wife, but that of the intelligent worker. When the seed time of the movement has been lived through by anxious and inspired women, the government may step in to reap the harvest of a nation's gratitude.[4]

This female patriotic *agri*-culture grew stronger in the postwar years. When the Second World War began, nations organized many of their homefront campaigns around strengthening the efficiency of the so-called weaponry of nature. Denman, director of the British WLA in the Second World War, claimed the German people and especially Hitler were out to "starve the British people into submission."[5] Whether urban or rural, young or old, single or married with children, women in the first half of the twentieth century found political, social, and inner voices through laboring with and against nature for their nations. Mothers, daughters, and sisters found that though their nations needed them to cultivate victory, their experiences and hard labor on the land brought them deep empathy, compassion, and understanding of class and racial perspectives that they might not have otherwise been privy to. The "land girls" of the Western world set out to transform nature into victory, but in the end, found themselves transformed.

Addressing how women viewed their roles and how those views compared with and contrasted to those of other workers, domestics, the general public, and their national governments, then, is a difficult task that is best achieved by first analyzing individually the kind of labor performed and then comparing and contrasting the overarching themes that transcend geographic location, culture, and time. Agricultural labor, whether domestic or commercial, urban or rural, served as a solution to the myriad of social, political, and gendered struggles women faced in the decades leading up to the First World War as such labor often agitated the social order. Political and personal liberation of women was not the result of a few acts of the "great" thinkers and reformers of the day, but a culmination of many, many acts of resistance and change that took place over decades. Women at the end of the nineteenth century found little or no hope of a profession or access to political and social equality; and those women in Western societies born of working-class status either married or became a servant of some measure, or both. Women of somewhat higher social stature, however, had the option to marry or to remain single in the family's household if financial responsibilities allowed. Society did not encourage these women to think of employment as an option—socially it was seen as a sign of financial weakness and denigration to their attractiveness in "society with a big S." Therefore, women of strong minds and limited opportunities involved themselves in philanthropic adven-

tures and thus sought the non-wage-earning career of social activism to find fulfillment. These "small acts" in many ways led to dramatic changes in social acceptance of women as laborers, political equals, and vital contributors to the strength of their nations.

Female activists did not fight alone in their quest for political, social, and economic reform; many other groups or movements of the day sought change in the workplace, living conditions, and political equity. Activists for the advancement of women and their organizations were more diverse than perhaps any other group of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries because they did not merely focus on one goal or even a small group of goals. For women, gender alone determined their lot in life, though arguably class and race complicated it even further. The nature of discrimination and prejudice against their sex dictated that they were unequal in every aspect of life; therefore, female activists and reformers sought not to change just one or a few situations, but all areas needing improvement. Areas of concern and reform included education, politics, and labor; and though there existed a complicated internal battle between upper-class and working-class reformers, it is worth noting and exploring further that, regardless of social orientation, many of the programs and reformers benefited from and benchmarked each other's platforms and strategies. For example, some English members of the International Council of Women (ICW) were also members of the Women's Agricultural and Horticultural International Union (WAHIU) and brought with them ideas about women's place in agriculture when they helped form and joined the membership of the WLA during the First World War. It is in this light that we must view the development of agricultural education and organized labor for women during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, for, through the lens of the small acts of various international women's agricultural labor reformers, we observe how a stronger societal appreciation of women's place in the nation emerged.

This book follows two unique and at times imposing storylines as it narrates two fields or perspectives of history—women and the environment—and observes each through the lens of cultural and national identity to the point where the two intersect, and where the narrative of each myopic view takes on the patina of the other. Throughout, I analyze how British and American government agencies utilized the images and memory of women and of their lives to tie both the mental and physical images of women to the land and to forge a connection of women and nature as voiceless symbols of nationalism. I utilize newspapers and government propaganda found in formal and informal collections of various national archives, libraries, and war memorial organizations to offer the reader a sense of what governments ex-

pected of their female citizens during wartime and how those governments viewed food as a tool of diplomacy. Then I compare and contrast how women's organizations and actions provided outlets for the creation of imagined communities and opportunities to voice their ideas, though at times those voices went unrecognized publicly. Exploring the transnational exchange of ideas of women's organizations and leaders gives new insights into the interconnectedness of environment, gender, and nationalism. Here I utilize organizational records, personal memoirs, letters, and manuscripts of women who found expression of their patriotic activities through the printed word. Images of propaganda, labor, and popular culture complement this exploration and provide a visual example of the evolving image of cultivation spanning an entire century.

Divided into three parts, this book explores the urban and rural campaigns of the First and Second World Wars and the cultural memory associated with them. Part I explores the origins of, as well as the working structure of, the various limited national support campaigns of the war garden and WLA movements by charting the philanthropic adventures of early reformers of the late nineteenth century. It is the work of these women, connected by international communication and interest, that solidifies the resolve of women in the early twentieth century to get involved in helping win the First World War. Women's organizations filtered information and activity between the government agencies and the laborers themselves and vice versa. Through such progressive organizations both national and international, important relationships formed that helped forge a coalition of women eager to make a place for themselves in international, national, and local political realms. Women's organizations helped administer information and support as well as womanpower for wartime consumption, conservation, and recycling programs. Activists in many of these organizations during the First World War later served to create and lead the WLAs of England and the United States during the Second World War, when nations called upon these women's organizations for the support and mobilization of agricultural employment once the threat of war appeared imminent.

The development and lasting impact of war gardens stemmed from a growing awareness and interest in progressive social reform. In America, previous agricultural activities based upon urban societal improvement such as urban cultivation programs, school gardens, and civic beautification programs, provided the ease of opportunity to create war gardens during the First World War. Women who formed agricultural movements did so to aid the war effort out of a desire to promote social and political reform, whereas women who actually served in such wartime agricultural programs did so out

of a desire to express their patriotism or to find employment or simply out of a desire to escape the clutches of chaperonage. From a broader perspective still, we must examine the role governments played in such movements. Though the reformers were responsible for inspiring public approval of women's place in agriculture, it was government-sanctioned wartime programs that would eventually take over the women's agricultural labor movement. Though the elimination of records of the WLA at the end of the First World War make it somewhat difficult to obtain official images and records from the period, those that do remain offer rich details about the importance of the image of women laboring on the land.

Part II discusses the role of war gardens and WLAs during the Second World War as well as the political diplomacy associated with them. After the First World War, war gardens acquired the label of victory gardens, and the wartime food campaigns of the Second World War called upon urban cultivators once more. Building upon the success of the WLAs in the First World War, nations turned to urban women to fill the labor gap once war claimed male farm laborers and left work available. Despite the growing acceptance of women as farm laborers, the members of the WLA continued to face prejudice and lack of recognition. Here it is necessary not only to examine personal memoirs of members, laborers, and leading figures in the development of the victory garden and WLA movement, but also to explore the significance of images used in wartime propaganda of victory gardens. The role of image (in propaganda posters, pamphlets, and other mass media) in setting standards and suggestions for domesticity and youth is crucial in understanding the role of the victory garden and WLA in shaping both gender and age roles as well as social and political behaviors in a modern society.

Part III examines the postwar cultural memory of the rural and urban agricultural movements. As Britons expressed their admiration for the land girls of the WLA, Americans nearly erased the farmerettes from their cultural memory, adopting instead a wartime ideal of urban women working in factories and planting victory gardens in efforts to display the abundance of the nation. In the postwar years, many attempts at urban gardening movements recalled the successes of the wartime gardens, though the motives for and attitudes about gardening changed significantly. Britons and Americans alike found that their cultural memory, like the soil, could be cultivated to achieve personal and political gain.

I conclude by analyzing how the public recognition, or lack thereof, at the end of the Second World War profoundly shaped the cultural memory of women's role and place in agriculture. More than just the individual memories of the women who cultivated victory are important here; national and

cultural memories are also profoundly significant. Women and cultivation became symbols of nationalism and wartime nostalgia through both a consumer culture and through foreign relations of the United States and Great Britain. While women transitioned from wartime to a postwar society and economy, nations looked at food as a tool of diplomacy and symbol of democracy. Thus governmental propaganda, personal letters, and newspapers help to convey the governmental and personal perspectives on the history of the movements, while an examination of the modern world of consumption provides nuanced perspectives that illustrate how popular and cultural memories about the war efforts penetrated the consumer industry.

With recognition of and respect to the various avenues by which one could explore this history, this perspective is unique. This narrative, in an attempt to illustrate the international connections and collaboration, is designed to provide an overarching view of the projects and people involved. At the same time, it also explores the narrative of the individual in an effort to find commonality among the international programs and to analyze their significance to the people they served. Without the texts and inspirations of many histories previously written, perhaps this story could be told, but with less direction and seasoning. This book is not an attempt to present one history better, but rather to serve as a bridge to many histories within which the previously published stories reside. In many ways the subtle methodologies of this book complement yet complicate the existing narrative of nations, nature, and gender in the twentieth century; for, although this is a transnational, comparative story, nations and individuals cultivated identities unique to their own wartime experiences—thus comparison is at times difficult to present in one neat and linear narrative.

This book aims to explore national and transnational interconnections and variances in the creation of, motivation for, and methods of operation of the Victory Garden and WLA campaigns of the First and Second World Wars as well as their cultural transcendence through time. Histories of the individuals serving in the WLAs grow in number as the cultural memory grows regarding wartime service. The story however will mark new territory in both historiography and analysis of victory gardens and the WLAs from environmental, gendered, and cultural perspectives and representations, as it will explore the varying perspectives of the United States and England and the similarities and differences in their respective wartime food campaigns. Thus this story attempts to bridge existing narratives by providing more inclusive and international narrative of social, cultural, and environmental connections to the events of war in the first half of the twentieth century than those preceding it, for no study to my knowledge has told the story of *both* the Victory

Garden and WLA campaigns in a single volume and looked at the significance of these topics from an international perspective. The perspective taken here is admittedly broad, yet necessary for analyzing the change of political and personal identity over time.

Whereas many other previous works of published literature (personal memoirs, photographic journals, etc.) all focus on one aspect or nation in their scaled perspectives, this study attempts to use sources that bridge the two campaigns and illustrate the significance of internationalism in shaping such nationalistic behavior as "digging for victory." Elements and examples of the textual and visual imagery of women found in government propaganda, news media, and advertising offer unique perspectives on gender, domesticity, and nationalism during these significant periods of wartime food production. Recognizing that one cannot analyze variances in identity without observing the personal perspectives on such programs by women who took part in them, I find editorials, interviews, diaries, and books written by women agriculturalists or in reference to women's place in agriculture are crucial to examining the transformation and complexity of how food and cultivation shaped women's identity in the first half of the twentieth century. These sources bring new perspectives on varied histories of the complex relationships women had with the land, each other, and their governments.

The twentieth century brought significant change in the relationships women and their governments had with agriculture. In the midst of struggles for political voice and recognition, women found opportunity in cultivation both for social, community, and political recognition as well as for broader personal and societal perspectives that ultimately altered their self-identification. *Who* cultivated for victory is significant. *Why* and *what* they cultivated for victory are significant. *Why* nations wanted them to grow and *what* nations did to get women to do it are significant. *How* we remember these women and their actions of cultivating victory is significant. In the history of Western society, the phrases "victory garden" and "Women's Land Army" are cultural legacies that have transcended time and connotation. How and why this happened is perhaps the most significant aspect of all.