Natural Farmers Cooperative/Rural Life Association Records  
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History
The Natural Farmers Association (later, Co-operative) of the St. Lawrence Valley formed in late 1977 as the result of a number of organizational meetings among small farmers, gardeners and homesteaders in St. Lawrence County. Among the core group of organizers was Alan Casline, Doug Jones and Tom & Jane Plastino. The group’s aims were to foster and promote natural, organic and alternative farming, to promote a local food economy and act as a support system to small rural farmers and homesteaders. Almost immediately it became apparent that a major focus of the group would be direct marketing of local produce. In the early 1980’s the co-operative hired, with the help of outside funding, marketing coordinators to assist this effort.

With the increasing emphasis on marketing, a split developed between the growers and those more interested in the concept of homesteading, resulting in the creation of the Rural Life Association in 1983. The Natural Farmers Co-operative essentially disbanded and the cooperative marketing of local produce was taken over by Green Growers Co-op. After several years of dormancy, the Rural Life Association has been resurrected as an information sharing organization promoting development of sustainable agriculture, preservation of small family farms and rural lifestyles in St. Lawrence County.

Scope and Content
The materials in this collection are divided into three series.
Series 1 contains meeting agendas, financial reports, newsletters and other material from the Natural Farmers Association, and the Natural Farmers Co-operative of the St. Lawrence Valley, Inc between 1979 and 1983.

Series 2 consists of meeting agendas, newsletters, membership lists and news clipping documenting the Rural Life Association between 1983 and 1990. Also included is a student research paper on Homesteading in St. Lawrence County, and duplicate copies of many of the RLA documents.

Series 3 contains miscellaneous material included in the NFC/RLA files.

Provenance
Gift of Valerie Ingram, a member of the Natural Farmer’s Co-operative and the Rural Life Association.

Series 1—Natural Farmers Co-operative Records

Box/Folder Contents
1 1 Natural Farmer’s Co-operative letterhead
  NFC Standards for Market Vegetables, July 1980,
  NFC Board Meeting agendas June-November 1981
  Memo, Bill Sutkus to NFC Board—Re: Separation of Homesteading & Marketing Activities  
    Dated Nov. 11, 1981
  Presentation to 12/15/81 Meeting of Natural Farmers Co-operative
  NFC phone tree
  Vista project application, Jan 20, 1982
  NFC flyer seeking farm apprentices for 1982 season
Profile of farms Requesting Apprentices in 1982
NFC Board Meeting Agendas March, May, Nov. 1982
Green Growers Co-op General Ledger, 7/31/82
NFC Board Meeting agenda, Feb. 1983
Cornell Cooperative Extension St. Lawrence County Growers Marketing Project info sheet and participation form

1 2  *Natural Farmers’ Association (Co-operative) Newsletters*
   1979—January, March, June, August-November
   1980—January, February, April, June, July, August, November, December
   1981—February-June, August, October
   1982—Winter, Spring, Summer, Fall
   1983—March

1 3  Natural Farmers Co-operative Directory Sept. 1982

1 4  Duplicates of NFC Newsletters

### Series 2—Rural Life Association Records

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<td>1 5</td>
<td>Announcements of Natural Farmers Co-operative pot luck luncheon to discuss homesteading&lt;br&gt;Homesteading Questionnaire&lt;br&gt;Agenda for Rural Life Association Steering Committee Meeting, May 1983&lt;br&gt;Rural Life Association mailing list, May 1983&lt;br&gt;Memo to Tom (Plastino) from ??, Nov. 1983&lt;br&gt;RLA Phone tree, Feb. 1984&lt;br&gt;Photocopy of New York Times article, Jan. 28, 1985 <em>Rural Homesteaders Seek Self-Sufficiency And Cherish Solitude</em>&lt;br&gt;Letter from Jon Montan to Pat Stone, Assistant Editor <em>Mother Earth News</em> turning down magazine’s request for an interview on Homesteading, May 22, 1985&lt;br&gt;RLA Mailing list, 1986; 1988</td>
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<td>Research paper—<em>The Homesteading Community in St. Lawrence County</em>, by C. Steven DeWalt, 1984</td>
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Unfolded  File cards/List of Rural Life Association members ca. 1983

### Series 3—Miscellaneous files

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<td><em>Birdsfoot</em> poetry collection by Alan Casline&lt;br&gt;Fall 1983 NOFA-NY News</td>
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