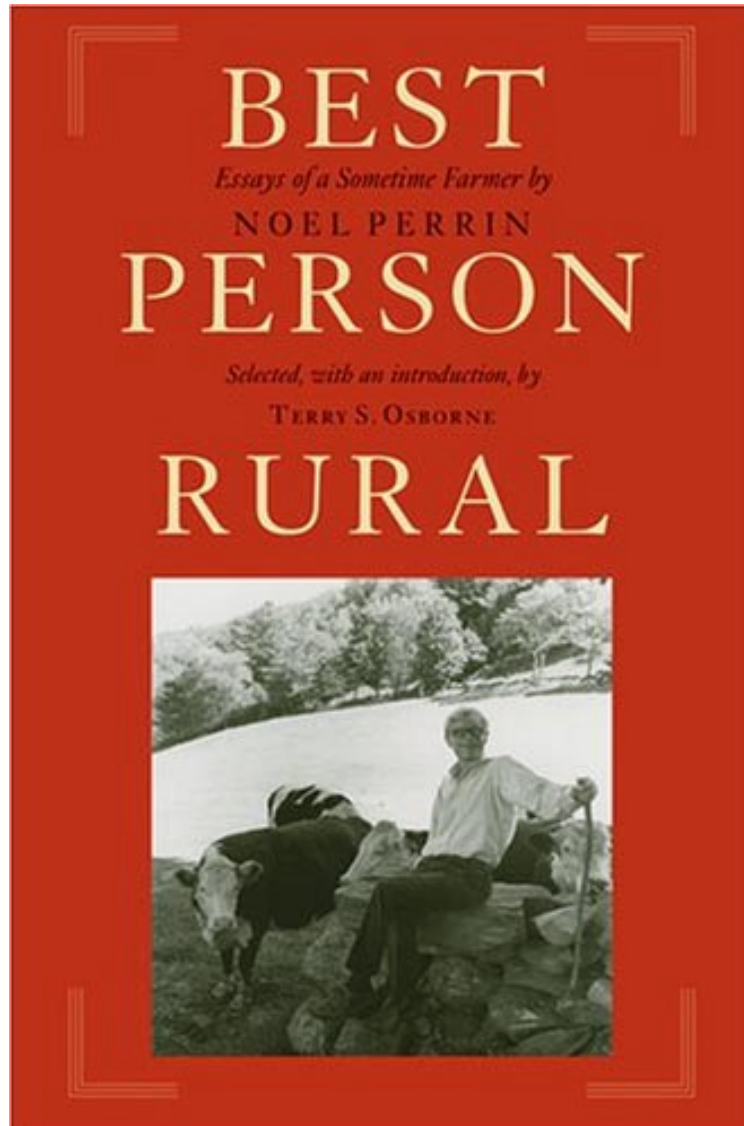


[Download] Best Person Rural: Essays of a Sometime Farmer

Best Person Rural: Essays of a Sometime Farmer

Noel Perrin

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In 1963, Noel Perrin, a 35-year-old professor of English at Dartmouth College, bought an 85-acre farm in Thetford Center, Vermont. For the next forty years he spent half his time teaching, half writing, and half farming. "That this adds up to three halves I am all too aware," he said, sounding a characteristic, self-deprecating note of bittersweet amusement at the chalk on his coat, the sweat on his brow, and the mud (and worse) on his boots. "I love this farm," he wrote shortly before his death in 2004, "every acre of it. The maples, the apple trees, the cattle, the wild turkeys. I love the brick farmhouse, which I believe to be about 190 years old ... and the two barns. I love the view from the kitchen window ... and the grander view to be had if you climb Bill Hill, the farm's in-house mini-mountain. The thing that delights me most, though, is that the farm really is a farm. It produces a little food every year, and most years a little fuel as well." It also produced four volumes of essays, beginning with the best-selling *First Person Rural* (1978). Some of Perrin's pieces are practical (how to build a stone wall), others philosophical (why to build a stone wall). One pretends to be about amateur sugar making, but it is really a metaphor for reality and illusion. Another pretends to be about the country as a retreat, but is really about the country as a place to meet the world head-on. One is a dangerous character sketch of a sow dangerous, because as Roy Blount said after reading it, "It almost made me decide to go ahead and get pigs." In short, these essays are as good as the literature of farming gets. *Best Person Rural* is a harvest feast, bringing together twenty of Perrin's best-loved pieces and five previously uncollected items, including his moving "Farewell to a Thetford Farm."

From Booklist Perrin's 2004 death deeply grieved the thousands who escaped from urban routine by reading his *First Person Rural* (1980) and the three subsequent *Person Rural* collections of essays in which this sometime farmer celebrates rural life. In this posthumous collection, one of Perrin's longtime friends, Terry Osborne, brings together many of the best essays from his four *Person Rural* collections and adds a handful of previously unpublished essays. Osborne has selected several pieces that memorably convey Perrin's keen pleasure in rural labor--fencing pastures, making maple syrup, cutting down trees, and splitting firewood. A number of other essays sketch out a philosophical perspective on the cultural meaning of rural life, reminding readers (for instance) that the inefficiency of a Vermont hay farmer reflects a wise recognition of natural limits. Yet other essays confront large-scale political issues affecting rural life--including the right of farmers to protect their way of life by resorting to ecosabotage. A cross-grained and piquant personality, Perrin has left readers with a wonderful legacy of regionally rooted writing. Bryce Christensen
Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved Perrin lets the language break down into little fragments, hard stones left by a receding glacier. It isn't easy to talk about the soul, and New Englanders have as hard a time as anyone. Perrin's writing mirrors that difficulty, that ingrained reticence. --Alex Hanson, Valley News