A foundation for a legacy-driven conversation about succession in a family farm business

by

Dennis Jackson

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Dr. Vincent Amanor-Boadu

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to provide a clear, concise, and hopefully, effective initial process to address the question of transitioning the operation of the farm business through the legacy framework. I have defined legacy as connecting ancestors to descendants, a definition that eases some of the challenges associated with equity and fairness when it comes to intergenerational transfers.

The research adopted a case narrative approach, where I focused on my family and my own decision processes in assessing the topic and question of interest. As such, I draw no inferences but hopefully I provide direction to families who are in the same place I find myself. The results from my initial conversations with my children revealed that while they were all aligned in keeping the legacy of the farm, my inability to clearly articulate what that entails might have contributed to some misunderstandings. This research has provided me with new perspectives to reengage them in conversation about legacy within the context I have defined above. I also intend to be deliberate in collecting information that will help me develop a clearer picture of the legacy and the potential solution to protecting it. Because my grandson has expressed interest in what could be a solution, and because that presents its own challenges, future work involves exploring how my children think about addressing any issues they might have if the legacy can be protected by having my grandson farm the land.

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DEDICATION

To my parents, for their inspiring example and their love, sacrifice, and unwavering belief in me, which motivated this journey and gave me the courage to endure to the end!

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

One of the most challenging tasks facing parents of any family business is how they transition the business to the next generation. The difficulty of thinking about this challenge and initiating conversations about it with family members often causes many family business leaders to keep putting off the task of succession planning until they are unable to do it. This often leads to disruptions in business continuity and sometimes breakdowns in family relationships. For this reason, it is important for leaders of family businesses to undertake the painful task of planning the transition of their leadership and management to the next generation of leaders and managers.

The observation above is not theoretical or abstract for me; I find myself having to deal with initiating conversations to transitioning the leadership of my family's business to the next generation. I also recognize the importance of separating leadership and management so that we can have conversations that are aligned with our family's legacy. These are foundational conversations because they form the bedrock of all other conversations to achieve the transition and succession objectives. My recognition of the potential emotional and challenging issues arising from just initiating the conversation, much less completing it successfully, has caused me to think about available resources to families in my situation. While numerous literatures purporting to guide the process exist online, a quick assessment using the Google AI tool, Gemini, confirmed my concerns that none of the material effectively appreciates family dynamics aspects in these conversations. A recent article on the subject offered practical steps that could be helpful for people seriously seeking to make effective transitions (Ward, 2025). Similar articles, for example, Baranova (2025) and Brekken and Hobson (2019), generally focus on the legal aspects of transition and succession but fail to address economics, which can muddy such conversations because people generally find it difficult to courageously discuss them without feeling bad about themselves. These guides talk about recruiting accountants and lawyers, bankers and financial planners, appraisers and insurance agents, and business succession consultants, counsellors, and mediators to help. They assume that these outsiders can better handle the family dynamics and reduce the risks associated with the conversations, and they are probably right in some cases. However, if the purpose of the conversations is to protect the legacy that has driven the business, leading them cannot be outsourced.

1.1 Purpose and Objectives

To this end, the purpose of this research is to provide a clear, concise, and hopefully, effective initial process to address the question of transitioning the operation of the farm business through the legacy framework. I have deliberately limited this work to managing conversations by helping all interested parties focus on the vision of driving a legacy-driven transition and succession. It is a skill I am learning as I go through the process, implementing some of the tools I picked up in my capstone Master of Agribusiness course, Advanced Agribusiness Management (AGEC 890) taught by my major Professor, Dr. Vincent Amanor-Boadu. They encompass a focus on clear definitions and on one's domain of influence in making strategic decisions. They also encourage deep conversations that allow stakeholders to be enrolled in the execution of any emerging strategies from the conversations.

Specifically, the question this thesis attempts to answer is this: How does the current leader initiate and conduct the necessary conversations about transitioning the family business to the next generation in a manner that ensures family harmony and sustenance of the legacy? As noted above, this is foundation to any effective business transition and succession process, and I believe if it is not done correctly can lead to significant upheavals in unintended places beyond the business. The overall objective, therefore, is to provide a framework that employs the Subjective to Objective process introduced in AGEC 890 to guide my conversation with my children about the next chapter in the family farm business. The specific objectives are as follows:

1. Provide the overall context for the conversation about legacy to illuminate its importance to succession
2. Develop a framework for legacy and how it is central to the family's farm business transition
3. Describe the positions my children have taken regarding the transition and explore how framing it around legacy might change those perceptions
4. Use the insights from the foregoing to develop a strategic approach to pursue a legacy-driven transition in our farm business.

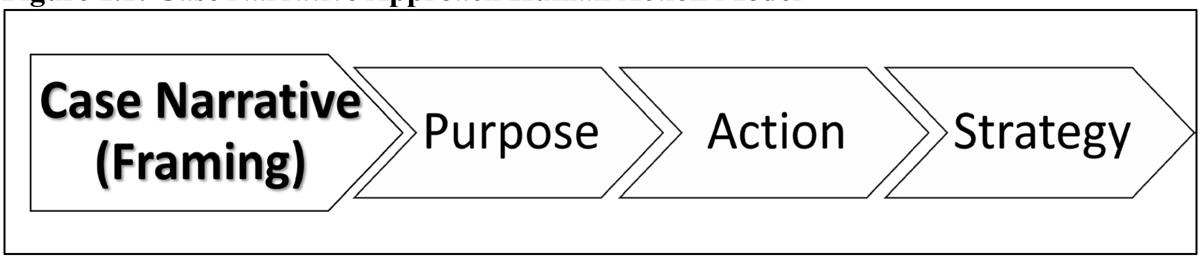
1.2 Overview of Methods

I am using the narrative method for this thesis because I have framed the question and defined the objectives. I present the events as stories that allow me to convey a process for achieving the overall objective of the thesis. This approach is common in history, anthropology, sociology, and political science research (Prescott-Couch, 2025). The approach is very useful in exploration that does not have an objective of establishing causal explanations but illumining pathways to understanding. By the nature of the question of this research, the applicable structure is the case structure. Therefore, one might describe the principal method used in this research as the case narrative method. This approach has been used to explore a multifaceted set of issues confronting consumers as they move between the digital and physical worlds ((Susilo, Matthews, Luck, Martin, & Letheren, 2024). It has also been employed in building process theories, allowing the transition from description to explanation (Pentland, 1999). It is important to recognize that the stories embedded in the narrative are the features of relationships, deeper structures of hopes and aspirations, and experiences that are not observable, or at least not directly observable.

I superimpose on the narrative economic judgment based on the axiom of human action economists that people never act against their self-interest (von Mises, 1998). In this view, purpose drives action and action defines strategy. The selected strategy is the "best" from among the alternative strategies that could be implemented to achieve the defined purpose (Eyster, Satterfield, & Chan, 2021). What is best is defined solely by the decision-maker, who alone understands the complete dimensions of the motivating purpose (von Mises, 1998). This supremacy of the decision-maker becomes clearer when viewed within the context of design, where the designer's purpose and action may be ill structured, wicked, and messy in other people's views but are perfectly clear to the designer (Fischer, Bissoonauth, Sotes, & Herr, 2025).

My purpose in doing this research is to develop a process that I may use to initiate the transfer of my family farm business to the next generation in a manner that ensures its legacy is maintained and sustained. I draw on literature and my own experience to develop a definition of legacy that captures this purpose in a manner that is both clear and pragmatic. In this sense, my definition of legacy might deviate from the traditional definitions, but it is done to serve the purpose of driving the work. My main contribution to the field's literature is developing an approach to value legacy with specific reference to a family farm business. This valuation approach is constructed from the earlier model of thought I presented on human action: purpose-action-strategy. If the value of the legacy is higher than its opportunity cost, then it is easier for the next generation to maintain and sustain it. In other words, the net benefit of maintaining and sustaining the legacy must be positive and higher than that of the next best alternative upon transferring the assets.

Figure 1.1: Case Narrative Approach Human Action Model



The critical challenge in maintaining and sustaining legacies is based on the honor system. Those to whom the legacy has been offered; those appointed by the caretakers of the legacy must believe in it enough to keep their words to those who offered it to them. After all, those passing on the legacy have in most cases passed on and are unable to enforce the terms of the passing on agreement from the grave. Of course, there are legal processes that may be put in place to ensure the legacy is protected, but the legacy is weakened as soon as these processes are challenged. Anticipating this possibility in future demand on the current legacy holders to develop a clear value proposition for the next generation to protect, maintain, and sustain the legacy and that demand a positive net benefit that is superior in the next generation's definition of the next best alternative. Each subsequent generation must provide a superior net benefit.

1.3 Outline of the Thesis

The layout of the thesis is as follows. In the next section, I provide the historical overview of the first generation and the building of the family farm business. I start the narrative from my parents' building of the business and my role in it. The section ends with the second generation, i.e., my generation. In the third section, I review the literature on legacy and explore how it is developed or procured. Section 4 presents the summaries of my conversations with my children and uses them to assess alternative ways of framing the question of legacy and its potential protection. The final chapter presents a summary of the research and provides a list of the work that remains to be done to complete securing the legacy of Wells and Jodie Jackson.

CHAPTER II: A BRIEF HISTORY OF JACKSON FARM

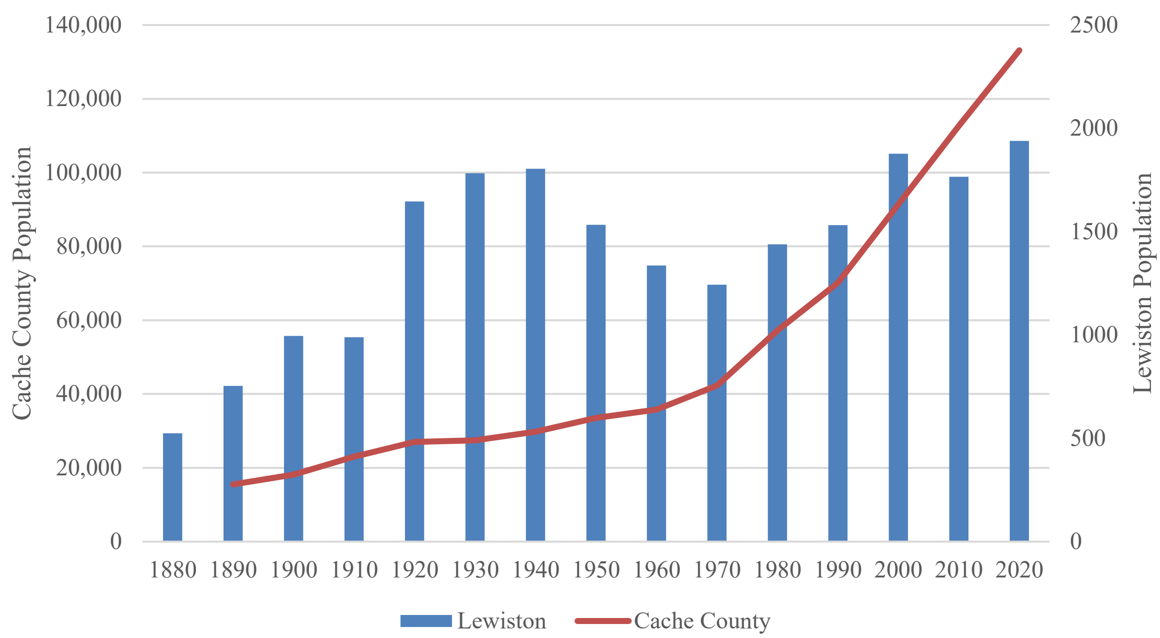
It is difficult to understand what legacy is without a historical context into which to put it. This chapter presents the history of Jackson Farm with a view of developing what I see as its legacy and forming my own appreciation of this legacy. I organize the history into three epochs. The first covers the founders, who were my parents. Their reason for the farm was different from my reason for continuing to manage it and farm it. My role in the farm's evolution is presented as the second epoch of the farm's history. The third and final epoch is where we are getting into now and assessing how changes in the economic conditions of the family and in agriculture. That is discussed in Chapter 4. For now, in this chapter, we look only at my parents' generation and my generation and our relationship with the farm business.

2.1 The Founders (My Parents)

Wells Jackson and his wife, Josephine (Jodie), are my parents. They both lived in Lewiston, Cache County, Utah for virtually all their lives. They moved from Lewiston to Cornish for six years to manage a farm operation. My dad and mom were born in 1912 and 1913, respectively, and married in 1933. Like many of their generation, my parents did not inherit any farmland; they purchased 40 acres of irrigated farm ground in Lewiston, Utah in 1950 when they returned to Lewiston from Cornish. Prior to purchasing their own land, my dad worked as a farm hand on a nearby farm. This reveals the economic background of my parents and frames the importance of their accomplishments for me.

Lewiston, located in Cache County, is one of the northernmost cities in Utah, bordering the state of Idaho. Lewiston was settled in 1870 and participated in its first U.S. census in 1880, when its population was 525. In the first three census years, Lewiston's population increased by nearly 90%, reaching 995 in 1900, and then declining slightly by about 6% between 1900 and 1910 to 989. The population has experienced declines four more times: 1950; 1960; 1970; and 2010. Indeed, in the year Wells and Jodie bought their 40-acre irrigated farmland, Lewiston recorded about a 15% decline in its population from the previous census (US Census Bureau, 2022). Lewiston's population in 2010 was about 1% lower than it was in 1930. The 2020 census put the population at its highest level in Lewiston's history – 1,939. The figure shows that the population growth in Cache County, unlike in Lewiston, has been experiencing exponential growth since 1970. This population growth is putting pressure on agricultural land. We will return to this later in Chapter 4.

Figure 2.1: Population of Lewiston and Cache County, Utah by Decennial Census Years (1880-2020)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2025

This census also reported that 100% of Lewiston's population lived in rural areas. The foregoing information is important to put the future of the land Wells and Josephiine bought within the context of local economic development and its potential from competitive uses going forward into the future. It also underscores some of the perspectives about legacy redefinition later in conversations with the family.

The Jackson Family Farmland was one-sixteenth of a full section that had been homesteaded by a large, prominent pioneer family of the community in the late 1800s and divided over time and generations. The soil was of excellent quality sandy loam texture. The property had only a modest log cabin on it for a residence; there were no other improvements as far as farm outbuildings. It was from those humble beginnings that my parents' dream of owning and operating their own farming enterprise started to become a reality.

Over the next five decades, Wells and Jodie farmed the land and raised their two kids, my sister Janean and me. By 2000, my parents were getting on in age and my sister and I had moved off the farm, pursuing our individual activities. At 94 and 92 years, respectively, Wells and Jodie decided to keep the farmland in the family instead of selling it by leasing it to Utah State University in a 20-year long-term lease agreement. The university conducted irrigated pasture grass research on the leased farmland.

By the time Wells and Jodie leased the farmland to Utah State University, they had quadrupled their original 40 acres to a total of 160 acres. They accomplished this with the help and support of immediate and extended family, neighbors, off farm employers, agricultural lenders, input suppliers, commodity processors, and divine intervention. The lease to Utah State University provided them with some income for their upkeep during their retirement, enough to not trigger any land sale. But then, they were humble people who lived humbly. Wells' favorite pastime was horse pulling, for which he and Jodie travelled extensively through the Western states. While Wells enjoyed his horse pulling, Jodie embroidered and crocheted beautiful pillowcases and Afghans for friends and family. Wells passed away in 2006, and Jodie followed two years later at 94 and 95 years, respectively. At the time of Jodie's passing, they had 12 grandchildren between their two children, and 35 great grandchildren.

Their commitment to the land revealed my parents' dream: To keep the land in farming as a testament to their perseverance and stewardship of agricultural land. My parents were not social advocates or ones who would join a demonstration about something they believed in. In that sense, they were not political. They were humble people who lived humbly with faith and love. Their belief in agriculture as a way of making a living simply and honestly and their commitment to living independently off the land were clear to both Karen, my wife, and I throughout the years. When they could not farm the land anymore, they did not sell it. Rather, they kept it in production by leasing it to Utah State University with the express agreement that it will return to the family at the expiry of the lease. Their commitment underscores our commitment to ensuring their legacy continues. Anything less, we believe, will be selling them short for the work they did, the life they chose to live, and the story they told with their humble life.

2.2 The Second (My) Generation

Let us begin understanding my relationship with my parents' dreams by contextualizing it in the evolution of our family and my own life. My dad had worked as a hired hand for several years for two brothers who owned a farm in a community near where we lived. All through those years, all he wanted was to own his own farm. So, it came to pass that dad purchased his first piece of land, 40 acres, in 1950 and moved his family to the farm to begin life as an independent farming family in Lewiston, Utah. It is worthy of note that about the only assets my dad could lay claim to prior to purchasing this land and moving to Lewiston were a strong work ethic, an able body with two hands, an equally hard-working and supportive wife, two children, two draft horses with sturdy harnesses, and a commitment to a clear vision of what he saw in his future.

My sister Janean is eleven years older than me, and she was 16 and I was five when we moved to Lewiston. She was anticipating beginning her senior year in high school when the move to the farm happened. As can be expected, the move caused some disruption in her senior year in high school plans. While I do not believe her friendship circle changed much, I also understand from the position I am now narrating this story that for a teenager, this disruption would have been a very significant one for her. From what I recall, the move had only a positive impact on me since I was only getting ready to go to kindergarten and did not yet have any attachments outside my home. I remember being very excited about the opportunity to have new playmates in my new school and across the street from our new house. It is possible that my parents presented the move to me in a much more palatable way than they could have presented it to a 16-year-old teenager. I also realize that because of the wide age gap between my sister and I, it always felt like I was essentially an only child. In this sense, my parents were my closest friends at home, and we did virtually everything together.

With the relationship that naturally emerged because of the age difference between my sister and I, my dad and I were together all the time for both work and pleasure. He made work fun, satisfying, and exciting. Because our relationship was so close, I gained a clear vision of what his dreams were for the farm over time and saw how hard he worked to make those dreams materialize someday. My mother shared my dad's dreams, supporting him with her full heart and her talent for managing the home and caring for all four of us.

My parents made a lot of progress towards their dream in their lifetime but ended short of complete fulfillment. Since their passing 20 (Wells) and 18 (Jodie) years ago, Karen and I have followed a path that has moved their dream forward incrementally. We are getting closer to its realization and would like to see it continued to final realization. What I am talking about is the dream of this land that my parents bought to provide a living for themselves and us is in itself a story of their lives and our lives. That they did not sell it or sell a portion of it in their old age to take care of themselves but leased it out instead tells me that their intention is to keep it in the family as a family asset doing that which they did with it.

2.2.1 My Preparation, My Education

I attended grade school (grades 1-6) at Lewiston Elementary in a new structure completed at the beginning of 2nd grade year. With the completion of the new building, the administration decided to introduce student government to the new student body. I was elected as the first student body president of the school and along with the other student officers drafted and adopted the first constitution introduced at the school. I attended junior high school of Lewiston Junior High (grades 7-9) located next door to the elementary school. During my 9th grade year, I again served as student body president. These consecutive elections revealed my leadership qualities which were visible to both my peers and teachers. I deliberately note that I did not ever aspire to student leadership. However, I always seemed to find myself involved, helping guide my peers towards accomplishing our collective objectives.

My high school education (grades 10-12) occurred at North Cache High School in Richmond. As in elementary and junior high schools, I was elected to serve as student body president in my senior year. This election was won by a write-in vote. I was the last student body president to serve at the North Cache High School when it was closed in 1964 and a new consolidated high school, Sky View High School, was opened in Smithfield, which started operations starting at beginning of the 1964-65 school year. The consolidation of the North Cache High School and South Cache High School in Hyrum was necessary because the buildings and facilities were old (from the 1920s) and becoming inadequate. But, as it was with several rural American trends in the middle of the 20th Century, efficiency was a stronger motivation for the consolidation. Operating a single high school was more efficient than operating two smaller senior high schools. It is also worth noting that the logistics of bussing students were becoming easier, allowing students to be transported from one community to the next for their education. These consolidations also allowed students in the consolidated schools to have more amenities and stronger athletic programs than the smaller schools could support. The discipline and work ethic of being a farm kid served me well as a high school student, just as they had helped me in the lower grades. My responsibilities and chores on the farm did not cease but continued throughout my years in public school.

Upon graduating from high school, I enrolled as a freshman at Utah State University (USU) in the 1964-65 academic year. I continued to live at home and work on the farm during this period of my life, with this contributing to funding my university education. I also received academic scholarships to help with funding my university tuition. I elected to serve a two-year LDS Church mission at the end of my freshman year. I served in the Northern States Mission which included Illinois, Eastern Iowa, Western Indiana, Wisconsin, upper peninsula of Michigan, and Northeastern Missouri. This experience was the most spiritual and emotional foundation of my entire life to date. I served from September 1965 to September 1967.

I returned to USU at the end of my mission service, enrolling in September 1967 and electing to major in finance with a minor in accounting and economics. I remained at USU for the next three academic years, graduating with honors in June 1970 with a Bachelor of Sciences (BS) degree in finance. During all these years, I continued to help on the farm whenever my academic program allowed me to. Therefore, I never really left the farm even when I left for university.

2.2.2 Meeting Karen and Coming Back to the Farm

In the last few weeks of the fall semester of my junior year (1968), I began dating Karen who was a student in the Business Education Department at USU. I had actually been introduced to Karen during spring semester of 1968 by her friend whom I was dating at the time. However, the relationship with her friend soured as the spring semester drew to a close and summer started. It became obvious that the excitement of summer fun was more important to her than I was, and we drifted apart.

I started hanging out more with Karen, but this was uncomfortable for her given that I had been dating her friend. After some time, both Karen and I overcame the discomfort when the aligned values increasing became clearer to us and our affection for each other deepened. Our friendship blossomed rapidly and we were married on June 27, 1969, the same month that Karen graduated with a BS degree in a composite major of business education and office administration. I still had a year to go before graduation.

I started my senior year in Fall 1969 and Karen began a master's program in business education. She also worked in the business department as a graduate assistant, and with her meager stipend, helped pay my tuition even as she earned credits toward her master's degree. It was clear that supporting me to achieve my degree was her primary motivation for being in the master's program in business education. Her degree was secondary. We struggled together financially and academically for the 1969-1970 academic year, but our endurance paid off in the end when I completed my bachelor's degree and Karen her master's.

I was recruited and offered a job by General Electric Corporation in their nuclear energy division at San Jose, California upon graduation. Like all new management recruits, I was enrolled in their financial management trainee program, a six-month probationary program for new managers with the objective of exposing them to the company's basic accounting tasks. As these trainee programs go, the tasks offered no autonomy, with periodic evaluations to measure progress based on vague standards. As my six-month completion date neared, I was informed that I had qualified to move on to corporate accounting headquarters in Schenectady, New York for a five-year assignment and then relocate at the end of the five-year corporate assignment possibly at an international location. After serious deliberation with Karen, we decided once and for all to follow our gut and listen to our hearts. Corporate America was not for us: The constant movement presented us with a sense of uncertainty and did not fit the lifestyle we have envisioned for ourselves. It was not a good way for us to raise the family we were envisioning.

With that decision made, we returned to the farm. The objective at this time was to do whatever was necessary to make our life on the farm economically, spiritually, and socially feasible. The decision to return to the farm also revealed to me the farm's paramount importance to me and confirmed that it has always been important to me. It was easier for this realization to sink in because Karen embraced it and shared this commitment with me. With Karen by my side, my parents on the farm, and the opportunity to build a dream together, we settled on the farm and have been since the early 1970s when we returned from California. It is untrue to say life has been a bed of roses. Far from that. However, the clarity of the vision and the love of those I care most about have sustained us here. We have raised our family of six children on the farm and feel grateful to my parents for offering us this gift of freedom. A gift that my grandparents were unable to give to my parents. This reality embodies the importance of the farm in our lives, and with it comes the strong desire to maintain and sustain it as a legacy to my parents' hard work and our continued honoring of that hard work.

CHAPTER III: LEGACY AND ITS APPLICATION TO JACKSON FAMILY FARM

I have made several references to legacy in the previous chapters of this thesis. However, I have not provided a definition of what I mean by it given that there are numerous dictionary and operational definitions. In this chapter, I intend to provide an overview of the different definitions and settle on one that fits my purpose. I begin with the taxonomy of legacy to show why it is very important to clarify its definitions in conversations with those who are expected to be responsible for it. I then explore how researchers of legacy with specific reference to family and other businesses have viewed it so that we can identify some of the opportunities and challenges those views present. The final section of the chapter presents the definition of legacy that I want to communicate to my family and secure their commitment to be faithful to it with respect to the farm.

3.1 Etymology of Legacy

Inherited from Latin, we identify two major definitions: (1) *Ligare*; and *Legare*. While the verb form of the first Latin definition suggests "to bind, tie, unite, gather, connect and/or link", the second Latin definition indicates "to bequeath," or the rare form meaning of "to dispatch as a delegation". The breadth of the root meanings explains some of the challenges of communicating and understanding what is a "legacy."

In ordinary English use, we can delineate three different meanings to legacy. First, is the bequeath of money or property for someone in a will. In this sense, an estate gift distributed after the death of an individual would qualify as the dead person's legacy (Cambridge Dictionary, 2026). This definition will fall under the second Latin meaning seen in etymology. Second, something that is inherited from a predecessor or from the past.

A synonym for this meaning could be heritage. The third and final English use of legacy is the descendant of an alumnus, often used in reference to admissions.

Legacy has found extensive use in technology, as in legacy systems. A legacy system is one that is no longer available to buy or use very often, and yet it is still used by some people or in some companies. IBM's mainframe machine is a legacy system because it is no longer used by the majority of companies. If it is desired by others who want to own it for sentimental reasons and not actually for use, then it becomes a classic. This is the case when collectors seek vintage cars.

We might also look at legacy as what memory people want for themselves. The Baltimore Sun is quoted by the Cambridge Dictionary as saying, "Every politician wants a legacy," i.e., an issue or institution that evolves far beyond the politician's time in public office (Cambridge Dictionary, 2026). Also, in discussing the singer Johnny Cash continuing to record even as his health deteriorated in the 1990s, Robert Hilburn, a music critic from early in the singer's career who worked at the Los Angeles Times and later his biographer, observed that he was doing this in attempts to regain the legacy he thought he had lost (NPR Staff, 2013). In both these examples, legacy is made tangible, something that can be lost, gained, or acquired.

Let us wrap up the discussion on the etymology of legacy by looking at a classification offered by the University of Oxford's History of Science Museum. They identify four types of legacies: (1) Pecuniary legacy; (2) Specific legacy; (3) Residuary legacy; and (4) Reversionary legacy. A pecuniary legacy allows a donor or a giver to specify the sum of money they are choosing to give or donate. A specific legacy enables a donor or giver to leave a specific asset (building, works of art, company shares of stock, land, etc.) to the recipient. A residuary legacy is a gift of all or part of a donor's estate after other legacies and expenses have been paid. It is, thus, the residual asset that is directed to the recipient. A reversionary legacy allows the donor to leave assets to a beneficiary while giving a named person or organization the benefit of those during the named person or institution's lifetime.

3.2 Framing Conversations about Legacy

From the foregoing attempt to encapsulate a definition for legacy, it is obvious that it is almost like all other important things in life; the user and the context engender the meaning or the sense we make of it. Let us use three stories to attempt to establish this user and context framework for legacy. The stories have been selected to show how legacy may emerge and evolve, sometimes with and without the protagonist's participation in its construction. My parents, Wells and Jodie Jackson, did what they did because it was what they needed to do. My wife Karen and I were direct beneficiaries of their choices and see as part of expressing our gratitude a perspective of these choices and actions as worthy of keeping, protecting, sustaining. The framing of legacies, then, have sensemaking by others and a time lag involved. But, before we get to addressing the relationships between legacy and sensemaking and time, let us tell the stories of Nelson Mandela, Tony Blair, and the Peruvian Mormon missionization as we see it in relevance to this thesis. Yes, the perspectives we bring to these stories are wholly through a lens that seeks to achieve our purpose for the thesis and not to support, justify, promote, or judge their protagonists.

3.2.1 Nelson Mandela

Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela was born on July 18, 1918, in Mvezo in South Africa. He died on December 5, 2013, having lived what seemed like 95 years of an illustrious life. He was the first President of post-apartheid South Africa from 1994 to 1999. He joined the

African National Congress (ANC) in 1944 and soon convinced the organization's leadership for a youth wing to mass mobilize Africans in opposition to apartheid. Although an advocate of non-violence in political struggles, he ultimately founded Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation) with his friends Walter Sisulu and Joe Slovo. His activism for equal opportunities for all South African increased over the years and resulted in several arrests, culminating in his arraignment as a member of the defendants in what became known as the Rivonia Trial in 1963. Mandela and his co-defendants were charged with four counts of sabotage and conspiracy to violently overthrow the government. Although four of the accused denied involvement with Umkhonto we Sizwe, Mandela and the other five defendants admitted sabotage but denied their involvement in initiating guerrilla war against the government (Mandela, 2004). The defendants used the trial to highlight their political cause, and Mandela delivered a three-hour speech that came to be known as "I Am Prepared to Die." He stated his philosophy of the South African struggle in this speech, with the following lending to the title that was given to the speech in the press after it had been delivered in court:

> … I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons will live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to see realized. But if it needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die. (Mandela N. , 2016).

Mandela and two of his co-defendants were found guilty on all charges and sentenced to life imprisonment. After 27 years, Nelson Mandela was released from prison by F.W. de Klerk, the president of South Africa, who had come to terms with the unsustainability of apartheid with the fall of the Berlin Wall and of the Soviet Union. After his release from prison, Mandela had become the de facto leader and public face of the

ANC, ultimately becoming its presidential candidate in the first national democratic elections in South Africa and facing de Klerk and his National Party as the principal opponent. As widely expected, the ANC won, taking 63% of the vote but falling short of the two-thirds majority needed to unilaterally change the constitution. The ANC also won seven of the nine provinces, with Inkatha and the National Party sharing the remainder equally.

Today, Nelson Mandela is seen as a stalwart of racial harmony and reconciliation. He is celebrated for cultivating and building a "Rainbow Nation," where people of all races and beliefs may live in peace with each other and pursue their individual happiness without state interference. The consensus is that Mandela's legacy is peaceful coexistence of the races, with various sources highlighting his moral leadership in rehabilitating South Africa's image and stature globally. By his death, South Africans of all races have, in general, come to accept him as the "Father of the Nation" (BBC News, 2012; Barnard, 2014). He became famous as the world's most popular political prisoner, an icon for several freedom fighters in that period globally, including the Civil Rights movement in the United States. Mandela has been depicted in films and featured in several stories. In the 2013 feature film "Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom" and in the 2017 miniseries "Madiba," the focus was essentially on his adult life. And the 2009 feature film "Invictus" focused on a specific event in his life, highlighting his unifying character through sports. The storytellers offer their visions of the man, visions that I argue he probably never had of himself. Despite the iconic stature that was built to present him, there is no evidence in Mandela's writings, speeches, or actions that he saw himself in this light at all. He did not write his legacy.

3.2.2 Tony Blair

Tony Blair, the longest serving UK Prime Minister from the Labour Party, served from 1997 to 2007. Let us put this tenure in office in context: The UK is on its fifth prime minister in the last five years (2022 through 2026). Born in 1953 in Edinburgh, Scotland, Blair attended the University of Oxford and studied law. He joined the Labour Party in 1975 and won his first parliamentary seat in 1983 and won the leadership of the party in 1994 when the then leader, John Smith, died suddenly. His giant charisma and affable style presented him as a new kind of politician, becoming what has been argued as the finest opposition leader of modern times (UK Government, n.d.). He defeated John Major in the 1997 general election and assumed the prime minister's office with a parliamentary majority. He will lead his party to win two other elections – the 2001 and 2005 general elections. He resigned as Prime Minister on June 27, 2007.

One of Blair's biggest achievements was the Good Friday Agreement (or Belfast Agreement) in 1998. It was a peace accord that ended 30 years of violent conflict in Northern Ireland generally between the Irish Republican Army (IRA) (mainly representing the Catholic Nationalists) and the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) (generally representing Protestant Unionists). This characterization of the opposing factions is simplified to only make the point of explaining the importance of the Good Friday Agreement and not to delve into the Irish conflicts. The Agreement comprised to elements: A treaty between the UK and Ireland; and a three-way agreement involving the eight political parties in Northern Ireland, the Ireland Government, and the UK Government. For the first time, the Irish Government accepted an international agreement that was binding that Northern Ireland, which it had claimed since the 1920s, was part of the UK, amending the Irish Constitution to this effect (Morgan, 2011). It is the complexity and contentiousness of the issues in the British Irish positions that make Blair's role memorable.

Blair had made Northern Ireland a priority while in opposition and from the first day of his premiership, taking his first official visit as Prime Minister to Belfast. It was, in his words, Blair wanted "to see in place a fair political settlement in Northern Ireland – one that lasts, because it is based on the will and consent of the people" (UK Parliament, 2023). He opened secret contact with Sinn Fein, the IRA's political wing, in order to bring republicans into the political process, he built trusting relationship with Irish Taoiseach Bertie Ahern, and showed his personal interest in the outcome of the negotiations by moving 10 Downing Street (Prime Minister's Office) operations to Stormont Castle in the final days of the negotiations in April 1998. Blair maintained the momentum for the negotiations by setting strict deadlines and used his personality and office to intensely persuade the negotiators whenever there were deadlocks, and leveraging his relationships with foreign leaders, including U.S. President Bill Clinton, to bring external pressure on the negotiating parties (Clinton, Blair, & Ahern, 2023).

Blair was a staunch supporter of the UK-U.S. relationship, supporting U.S. bombing of Iraq in 1998, risking significant domestic support to participate in the protecting the Kosovars, as well as supporting democratic institutions in getting involved in the Sierra Leone conflict in 2000. He was one of the first to support President Bush in his policy to defeat Islamic militantism after the 9-11 attack, first in Afghanistan in 2001 and then in Iraq in 2003.

Mr. Blair has focused on international diplomacy, faith advocacy, and policy consulting since leaving office. Shortly after leaving office, he took on a role as the special envoy for the Quartet (United Nations, United States, European Union, and Russia) on promoting peace in the Middle East until 2015. He established the Tony Blair Faith Foundation in 2008 to encourage interfaith dialogue and counter extremism and founded the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change in 2017, which he said was intended to function as a "new policy platform to refill the wide-open space in the middle of politics" (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2026). From his actions after leaving office, it seems Mr. Blair was conscious of the legacy he wanted to leave. He has envisioned his legacy as modernizing the UK Labor Party to move from its aversion to market economics to be a bridge for market economics and social justice (BBC, 2017). In his 2010 autobiography, *A Journey*, Blair notes that:

> In what caused much jarring and tutting within the party, I even decided to own up to supporting changes Margaret Thatcher had made. I knew the credibility of the whole New Labour project rested on accepting that much of what she wanted to do in the 1980s was inevitable, a consequence not of ideology but of social and economic change. The way she did it was often very ideological, sometimes unnecessarily so, but that didn't alter the basic fact: Britain needed the industrial and economic reforms of the Thatcher period (Blair, 2010, p. 101).

He wanted to be the international statesman by his many actions since leaving office. Sampath (2025) observes that the developer of the Blair doctrine of "humanitarian interventionism" is "set to play a key role in governing Gaza" after the war as per the U.S. President Donald Trump's 20-point peace plan (Ferragamo, 2026). Thus, unlike Mandela who quietly left the world stage upon voluntarily not seeking re-election after his only term as President of South Africa, Blair has maintained a public presence, actively engaging in assignments and activities that are structured to contribute to his sense of who and how he wants the world to remember him. May be because of the forces that conspired to cause his resignation from office, not the least of which was the support for the U.S. invasion of Iraq based on intelligence reports later shown to be false for its possession of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), he has had reason to define how he wants the world to remember him.

3.2.3 Peruvian Mormons Missionization

In the book, *Forever Families*, Palmer (2024) writes a chapter title "Legacy" in which he argues that the origin stories of both the pioneer, Anglo Momon and the Shining Path, Peruvian Mormon was God turning tribulations into blessings. From this perspective, Palmer argues that his granted both stories a legacy position in gospel culture. He, then, works on the changes the Peruvian Mormon story had to make to make room for Peruvians since "legacy" within gospel culture was limited to "pioneer culture" – U.S., white, male, pioneer culture. Hence, Peruvian women Lamanite-identifying Mormons had to build their legacy by creatively weaving their Peruvian origin stories into those of the Mormon Pioneers. This story, then, is one that explicitly builds legacy as a strategy of identity and place in a community. At the same time, it is important to recognize that we come to this story from history and how the participants saw and related to it is reaching us through several lenses of interpretation. But what the Palmer study emphasized was that legacy connoted the importance of connecting descendants to ancestors through their faithfulness to the official church despite tribulations, including the Martin and Willie handcart disaster of 1856 in which more than 150 overland travelers from Illinois to Utah perished in a snowstorm. The disaster and its telling contribute to legacy building and promotion from disaster and tribulations. He discovered that participants in his study lived legacy in a complicated manner, "an interwoven mat of contradictions that deepened connections, enshrouding the term [legacy] with mysteriousness that captivated them in its indefinability" (Palmer, 2024, p. 96). For example, he notes that with the arrival of Peruvian immigrants to the U.S. between 1950 and 1980, there a conscious effort by some of their women members of the Mormon Church to move to northern Utah and form Spanish-speaking Mormon branches within the greater English-speaking stakes of Zion. These branches were constructed deliberately as places where people of different ethnicities could gather and engage each other in ways absent from Anglo U.S. church spaces. This included instituting celebrations of indigenous legacy. Parman observes that Lamanite identity allowed Latin Americans to embrace their indigeneity as textually verifiable, erudite, and of Israelite origins. In other words, they found their legitimacy through the legacy they inherited. They reframed their story as Lamanites to replace the stereotype of the melancholic, introverted peasant with the festive Indian, wearing multicolored wool clothing. Through this reframing, the legacy was constructed to connect the present to the past and establish legitimacy of place and right to belong (Palmer, 2024, p. 99).

From this perspective, legacy is a construction necessary for identity formation and belonging. It was not an individual initiative but a collective journey of defining self and preserving ancestral connections. In this collective journey, roles may be gendered as a result of social responsibilities and expectations. Thus, Palmer notes that keeping the legacy of Peruvian Mormons in Utah became the responsibility of women because of the historic roles of men and women in indigenous Peruvian communities. For our purpose here, we use Palmer's study to recognize that successful maintenance and sustainability of legacies may require assigning different aspects of the legacy to different people with different skills. This recognizes the importance of competencies and capabilities in ensuring the legacy continues after the current generation has moved on. That is, the role legacy plays in connecting ancestors to descendants is distributed by capabilities, competencies, and commitment to ensure its sustainability.

3.3 Time Lags, Sensemaking, and Legacy

Let us conceive of legacy as we have hinted above. Legacy is a function of time and sensemaking. After Weick et al. (2005), let us conceive of sensemaking as turning events into a state that is explicitly understood in words and serves as a catalyst for action. Karl Weick has done extensive work on sensemaking over the past several decades, including using to frame major disasters, such as The Mann Gulch disaster (Weick K. , 1993), the British Royal Infirmary (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2003), and the Tenerife Air Disaster (Weick K. , 1990). The common thread in Weick's work on sensemaking is that it is central to decision-making. This would mean that whether someone takes on the burden of keeping a legacy will be influenced by how they translate the legacy's story into meaning that speaks to them in ways that motivate action. In other words, how does the legacy's story compel them to move emotionally, intellectually, and physically to connect to the essence of the story and, hence, commit to its transformation into the reality they perceive about it? From a sensemaking perspective, therefore, legacy depends on the content, framing, mindset, and setting of the story communicating with the legacy.

The three cases of legacy we explored earlier – Mandela, Blair, and the Peruvian saints of the Mormon Church – present different pathways of sensemaking about legacy. In the Mandela case, the legacy was embraced in a collective imagination of what the man embodied – the peacemaker, the "father of the nation," the global statesman. For Tony Blair, it is the curated and orchestrate efforts of the man himself marketing that for which he want to be remembered. The emotional connection to the Blair story is different from that of the Mandela story because one comes to you unencumbered, unforced, with transparent evidence while the other comes as a packaged product seeking a market. Legacy for the Peruvian LDS saints is a culture, a way of living in a community, where the essence of the legacy is the connection it provides between the ancestors and the descendants. It is embraced not out of duty or responsibility but as an identity. As such, those who are not part of the genealogical heritage cannot embrace the legacy since they will lack the essential ingredients for participation.

Time is a function in realizing, forging, making sense, and embracing legacies. This creates a lag between the events and their understanding in the sensemaking process. This time lag is also the source of some of the challenges associated with the communication of legacy stories. In the case of Mandela, the story of social justice resonated clearly among a large segment of global society but not all. There were Afrikaner South Africans who saw his life as their loss given the changes with which he is identified. It is important to recognize that the U.S. Government at a point in time saw Mandela as a terrorist and then as the only leader in South Africa. George Washington University Professor of Sociology Fran Buntman noted that neither view was true. “He was a peacemaker who embraced armed struggle, a traditionalist who embraced modernity and a believer in the rule of law who also saw a time for civil disobedience” (Lopez, 2013). But his story was loud, repeated, embellished, easily understood, and hence easily embraced. But as time passes, the essence of the story becomes distilled, and its central components become the full story. The meaning of the story is reduced to the easiest to consume. Same as noted by Palmer (2024), the Peruvian saints of latter generations understood what the legacy was as it was transmitted to them through stories, behaviors, taboos, and relationships.

The foregoing means that legacies must be crafted carefully and deliberately to engender the commitment the storyteller desires from the listeners. If the sensemaking the listeners make of the story does not compel them to embrace it and act upon it, then the legacy as presented is not compelling. On the other hand, if the storyteller can find the language and create the appropriate mindset and setting to tell the story, then there is an increased probability that it will have the desired effect. This approach of using the right language and setting to frame a mindset is seen in a lot of religious cultures. The Jewish faith used specific places to create the mindset and framed tribulations to illustrate the blessing that awaiting the Jewish people, setting them up as the chosen people. Similarly, the saints of the Mormon Church leverage their tribulations to tell the legacy of their blessing. These storytelling processes offer lessons for how families may organize their own stories to communicate their legacies and make it easy for descendants to embrace them, protect them, maintain them, and sustain them.

3.4 Wells and Jodie's Legacy

Like most 'pioneers, Wells and Jodie never thought about their legacy. For them, life was about taking care of your children, instilling in them your values, and guiding them to be faithful to God. If you succeed in these, then you have earned your legacy! The farmland was just a resource that Wells and Jodie used to provide for their family and guide them and teach them to be faithful to God. I probably understood that only in hindsight since I loved being with my dad on the farm and treasured the land as the resource that allowed us to be there.

Although Karen and I had turned down the rat race of corporate America and returned to the farm, we had taken off-farm jobs to supplement the farm's income. As my parents got older, and it became difficult for them to work on the farm, we were also getting busier with raising our six children and off-farm income became increasingly important in affording us the lifestyle we wanted. Indeed, the children's activities – school, extra-curricular activities, and our volunteer ecclesiastical leadership responsibilities – did not leave us any time to do much else. It is important to note that these priorities – God, family, and church – were very consistent with a long-standing family culture of coming before work and other temporal pursuits.

My parents leased the farm to Utah State University, allowing them to get income that contributed to their care. And while they could have sold some of the land to achieve this objective, they chose not to do that. As I look back to their decision, it becomes obvious to me the lesson they were teaching me through their actions. During the tenure of the long-term lease, our six children graduated from college and started families of their own. They also each utilized their agrarian work ethic to become very successful in their vocational pursuits. Our sons inherited their father's entrepreneurial blood and have each guided their respective ventures to the level of financial independence. Two of the daughters are employed in one or more of their brother's enterprises. The third daughter entered the health services industry after graduating in nursing and now directs a prominent hospice program in the community. It should be noted that all six children and their families reside within 15 miles of their parents and the family farm where they were raised. The farm my parents purchased to raise me has provided the roots through which Karen and I have raised our children and continue to provide us and, hopefully, our descendants with a connection to our ancestors. The land is the story and the embodiment of our history of perseverance, dedication, independence, and freedom. I believe these are the reasons why my parents did not sell it to improve their comfort. It is the reason I came back to live on the land and raise my own family. It is the legacy.

CHAPTER IV: ENGAGING THE NEXT GENERATION (MY CHILDREN)

Over the 75 years since establishing the Jackson Family Farm, its landholdings increased from the original 40 acres to 160 acres with the help and support of immediate and extended family, neighbors, off farm employers, agricultural lenders, input suppliers, commodity processors, and divine intervention. This is the modesty of my family, where like I said, temporal pursuits are sacrificed for God, family, and Church.

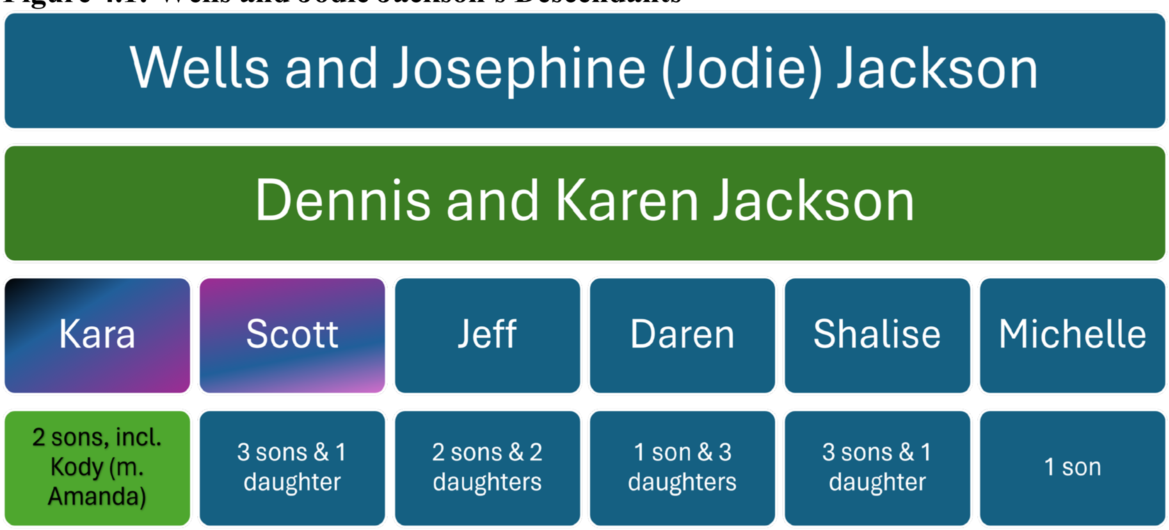
The long-term lease to Utah State University was terminated in July 2024, and the farm has been repurposed from research back into production agriculture. With all the children comfortably employed and Karen and I not needing to take care of our temporal parental duties, we could turn our attention to the essence of our lives. We are, however, aware of the time we have left. Even though we are financially unencumbered, Karen and I are, respectively, 79 and 80 years. We find ourselves in the same position my parents were in when we were busy raising our family. Our physical capacity to undertake the farm operations is limited because of our age. How do we engage our children to see and feel the connection Karen and I have for the farm given that they are all financially successful? It was probably a lot easier for me to return to the farm and draw on my attachment to my parents to make my home there because I was essentially an only child. How do my six kids construct this connection in a way that holds the essence of the farm above their individual personal desires?

In this chapter, I present the results of conversations I had with each of the six children to assess their thinking about farmland. These conversations are far from complete at the moment, but I hope what I have done in this thesis is construct a strategic purpose for communicating legacies as a reason for their emergence, personalization, and ownership. I use the synthesis of the conversations with my children to identify what others can do as well as chart the remaining course Karen and I need to take in order to ensure we keep the legacy of my parents through our children even as we preserve the harmony they now enjoy as a family.

4.1 Our Children and Their Positions on the Farmland

I have said a few times that Karen and I have six children: Kara (55), Scott (53), Jeff (51), Daren (50), Shalise (46), and Michelle (45). They are all married and have families of their own. Figure 4.1 presents the pictograph of Wells and Jodie's descendants along my line. All together, we have 19 grandchildren.

Figure 4.1: Wells and Jodie Jackson's Descendants



Karen and I have had extensive conversations with each of them as individuals and collectively with a view of soliciting their positions, perspectives, and appreciation of the story associated with the land. A general conclusion from these conversations is that the farm is our asset and therefore we should do what we want with it. This position seems to be unanimous among all of them. Yet, deeper introspective conversations reveal that varied opinions exist based on what they each consider the best path forward to maximize the benefits to the stakeholders of the next generation. I present in summary form the position of each child based on conversations with them. It is important to recognize that I have taken liberties in how I have structured these summaries and need to emphatically say that they are preliminary and could be wrong since I have not given them the chance to review what I heard from them and correct me. I am, in essence, recognizing my potential bias in how I heard each of them respond in our introspective conversations. This self-awareness is important not only for veracity of the facts but also to be true to each of them even as I anchor myself in humility.

4.1.1 Kara

Kara is married with two sons, one of whom is Kody, who has been cash leasing the farm along with his wife, Amanda, for the last two years. Kara's husband retired from an agricultural career at Utah State University, where he was a farm manager in the farm group of the College of Agriculture. Kara is employed by her brother in the CPA firm. She would very much like to see the farm business perpetuated with Kody and family in the long-term operation. She has offered to donate her share of any inherited value from the farm asset to Kody and Amanda.

4.1.2 Scott

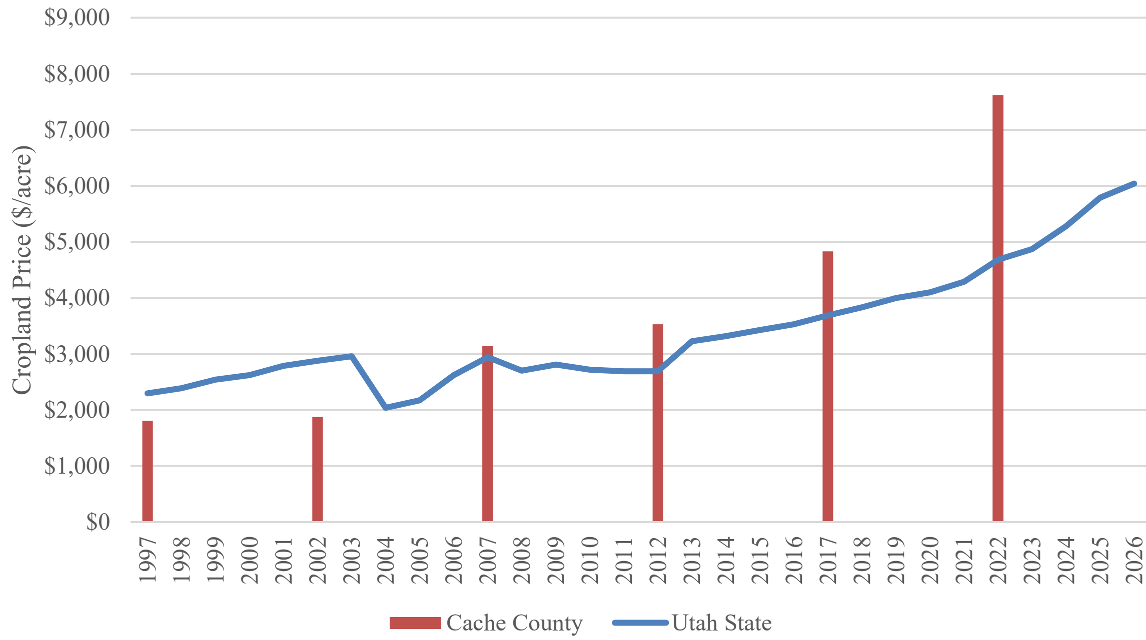
Scott is married with three sons and one daughter. He is a certified public accountant. His career spans 25 years in public accounting and presently is the managing partner of a regional CPA firm. He is financially independent and well respected in industry. He has been very engaged in the family business succession discussions as the siblings' spokesman. He, like Kara, has offered to donate his share of any inherited value from the farm asset to Kody and Amanda. However, he strongly believes that the family business will never survive financially as a farming operation given the competing pressures in the long-term to liquidate the land for development. Therefore, he considers Kody and Amanda's long-term objectives unrealistic.

4.1.3 Jeff

Jeff is married with two sons and two daughters. He is the founder of a land development and residential home construction company, "Visionary Homes," the second largest home construction company in the state of Utah and expanding regionally into the Western United States. As a child and adolescent, Jeff enjoyed farm life and demonstrated a lot of interest in the farm business. However, he majored in construction management and saw its lucrative potential compared to production agriculture. From that time until the present, his passion has led him to unprecedented heights in his chosen path. He still has a sentimental feeling about the farm but strongly feels the future of the farm is destined to be developed.

Jeff is right in his assessment of the farmland's potential as a cash opportunity without counting any non-pecuniary value as reflected in the legacy. Population expansion (Figure 2.1) pressure on cropland prices is reflected in Cache County and the broader Utah State (Figure 4.2). The figure shows that the population explosion in Cache County is causing an increasing premium for cropland prices, rising from about 6.8% over the Utah State average cropland price in 2007 to 62.8% in 2017, that is in only a decade. The trajectory of the premium suggests that as long as the population growth in Cache County continues, the pressure on farmland prices will continue. From this perspective, Jeff's view that he could create significant financial benefit for his siblings from the land is real compared to the potential returns from crop production. The reality is that Wells and Jodie had the opportunity to sell the land in their own time to increase their comfort and welfare in their old age. However, they chose to lease it out, earn moderate income, and live modestly in order to have the land in the family. Jeff's position is evidence that Karen and I have not communicated the essence of the legacy in a way that captures Jeff's emotional and psychological imagination.

Figure 4.2: Cropland Price in Cache County, Utah, and the State of Utah ($/acre)



4.1.4 Daren

Daren has three daughters and a son and holds a doctorate degree in entrepreneurship from the University of Florida. He has and continues to develop, assume the risk of, and sell business enterprises. He has been successively good at it and has leveraged his way into wealth. He is a very non-assuming and generous person and is developing a philanthropic approach toward others. He wants to see the farm succeed as a business operation and feels strongly that it must adapt its plan and structure to make that happen. Thus, Daren sees the potential for sustaining Wells and Jodie's legacy but is of the view that a new strategic approach is needed to make it real.

4.1.5 Shalise

Shalise has three sons and one daughter and, unlike the others, she and her family live on a two-acre parcel of land carved out of one corner of the farm. We sold it to them several years ago. She is a registered nurse and has been a hospice nurse for several years. She is committed to assisting Karen and me during our aging years and has long-term plans for continuing to live next to the farm. She and her family would like to see the farm remain intact as an operating unit in perpetuity. They have no ambitions of being financially involved in the operation but would be morally supportive of those who are.

Shalise identifies the critical separation of ownership and management as is often necessary in these family assets. Ownership entails pride and belonging and remains faithful to the legacy. Management, by its very nature, demands pecuniary results that have the potential to undermine the legacy itself. Yet, it is important to explore the pecuniary challenges associated with maintaining the legacy when financial support is inadequate. This brings us to Daren's position that the farm requires a novel strategy to ensure successful keeping of the legacy.

4.1.6 Michelle

Michelle is married with one son, and like Kara, works for one of her brother Daren's companies. She is the peacekeeper and is very considerate of her siblings' needs in her consideration of how she sees the farm. Her overarching desire is cooperation and harmony in how the siblings explore the farm asset and discuss how to maintain the legacy.

4.1.7 Grandson Kody

All our six children are successful in their own business pursuits. Our grandson, Kody, is the son of our daughter Kara. Kody is married to Amanda, and they currently have an infant son, Wade. Kody and Amanda are currently leasing the farm on an annual cash lease agreement, which was put in place for the 2026 production year. This is the second year they have cash leased the farm under the same lease agreement. It is obvious that Kody and Amanda are both committed to building their future in agricultural production. They are not doing this as a fleeting fantasy or merely as an experiment. They have indicated an interest in pursuing an arrangement that would enable them to acquire equity in the land to secure their future in the business.

4.2 The Opportunity and Challenge Presented by Kody

Kody and Amanda's interest in farming is aligned with the potential to keep the legacy. However, their aspirations to secure ownership of equity in the farmland present both opportunity and challenges in sustaining the legacy. Equity transfers ownership and with that transfer comes a risk of losing the legacy. For example, ownership implies the land can be used as collateral for loans and any default will spell the loss of the land, which is the anchor for the legacy.

At current cropland prices, the 158 or so acres available could fetch a market value of approximately $2.5 million. This is a hurdle for a beginning farmer who intends to stay in farming over the long haul. This means if we want to help Kody and Amanda accomplish their objective of being farmers, like their great grandfather, Karen and I must think differently about what the right thing is to do and how we do it to honor the legacy of my parents.

Karen and I are unencumbered financially, and our children all seem to be financially comfortable. Jeff is right about population growth putting pressure on farmland in Cache County, Utah for the foreseeable future. The new thinking we need to formulate is this: Does Wells and Jodie's legacy to keep the land imply keeping this land in Lewiston or having a Jackson involved in agricultural production throughout the generations? In other words, would the connection to the ancestors be maintained by the descendants as long as they are in agricultural production even if they are not working the original cropland in Lewiston, or does taking the Lewiston land out of the family break the connection to Wells and Jodie?

What if Kody and Amanda's embrace of the legacy changes the problem we started with? That is, it is no longer about our children but about maintaining the connection to the inherent and driving dream of Wells and Jodie Jackson. In this sense, we are drawing on how the Peruvian saints of the Mormon church defined their legacy in the church – a connection between ancestors and descendants. Does framing the conversations through this lens offer a different perspective about fairness and focus our collective minds on the legacy Karen and I have defined?

What if Kody and Amanda pay their land lease fees into an account that is invested prudently to allow them to increase their great grandparents' land holdings over time? In other words, they behave like leasers so the legacy can be expanded to ensure the competitive pressures of the future are confronted effectively through scale and efficiency. Since all the uncles and aunts have signaled their willingness to support them, this allows Kody and Amanda to operate the farm in accordance with the spirit of the legacy even as they grow it to ensure its survival. Nothing stops them from purchasing more land from their own returns after paying the lease on the legacy land.

CHAPTER V: EPILOGUE

The problem motivating this thesis was recognition that my wife Karen and I are getting up in age and we need to determine how we deal with the farmland my parents left for us. It has become obvious to us, over the years, that even though Wells and Jodie Jackson, my parents, did not articulate a legacy they wanted me to protect, their behavior spelled out their intent in very clear terms. They could have sold the 160 acres of land they acquired over their lifetime to finance a comfortable lifestyle in their old age. However, when they were unable to farm and I was unavailable to help, they put the land into a lease agreement with Utah State University. This ensured that the land was returned to the family when the lease was over. This action has convinced Karen and I that we owe them the respect and responsibility to protect their legacy as reflected in the land.

There are several definitions of legacy and several approaches to securing it. I like the legacy perspective Palmer (2024) describes as revealed by the Peruvian saints of the Mormon Church. For them, legacy is the connection between ancestors and descendants. In this light, we see the land as the connection between my parents and their descendants into perpetuity.

None of our six children is interested in farming the land. However, my grandson Kody, the son of my oldest child, is already leasing the land and has indicated a commitment to being a farmer. Land prices and other capital assets present serious barriers for beginning farmers, not unlike what my parents experienced. Does Kody’s interest in farming provide the connection between himself and his great grandparents, and in the process sustain the legacy? What are the fairness arguments that could emerge among the siblings if one grandson seemingly gets total access to the farmland? Does Kody paying rent (even if the rent is not distributed among our children but invested to purchase more land) address the fairness issue?

5.1 Next Steps

The real benefit of this thesis, in addition to meeting my completion requirements for my MAB degree, has been a sober reflection of the issues confronting succession and legacy. When I started, I was thinking about developing a succession plan. Then I realized my children were all successful in their own right, and the farm would only provide marginal income for them. Then I thought about what my parents have done in keeping the land in the family, and that transformed my focus from succession to protecting my parent’s legacy.

The research has brought me to a place where I have a clearer definition of what legacy I want to present to my children to reinitiate the conversation about the future of the farmland. So, I am going to reengage them in individual and collective conversations about their thoughts about the definition of legacy I have produced for our family, which is aligned with the Gospel culture (Palmer, 2024). I will develop a Likert scale of their preferences and assessments of the alternatives and the valuations so we can develop a “quantitative” estimate of the value they each place on the legacy as defined. I will also collect information about their perspectives about the role Kody plays in protecting the legacy and solicit ideas about alternative structures that may be implemented with the singular aim of protecting the legacy. Central in this, if we agree on Kody’s role, is to explore alternative approaches to ensure Kody builds his own legacy even as he protects his great grandparents’ legacy.

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