

Chapter 9

Finding Your Home In The Country

“And they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land. If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey” (Numbers 14:7-8).

This promise is for us as well as for the children of Israel long ago. In fact, the Lord gave it to us again through the pen of Ellen White:

“Parents can secure small homes in the country, with land for cultivation, where the children will not be surrounded with the corrupting influences of city life. God will help his people to find such homes outside the cities” (Ellen G. White, *The Review and Herald*, July 5, 1906).

In this chapter we are going to look at some of the most important characteristics that should be considered when looking for country property. While you most likely will not find a property that is “perfect,” attention to the issues outlined in this chapter will help to assure that your country living experience is a positive one.

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Water

While there are certain characteristics that are more important to some than others, this is one thing that I consider absolutely essential for any piece of country property. There are a variety of ways that this water can come. It may come in the form of a spring, creek, or river. The property might even border a lake. In such cases, you will need to have an adequate filtration system for household use. In most cases, the water will come from a well.

When evaluating the water supply on a piece of property, it is important to be realistic about your water needs. While a family can get by with very little water in terms of drinking, bathing, and cooking, remember that one of the reasons for country living is to grow your own food. Agriculture requires much more water than just a typical family would use for their personal needs. For example, we have fruit trees, berries, a small garden, lawns and flowers which require more than 2,000 gallons each day to sustain them during the summer months. If you are depending on a spring or creek, make sure it flows year-around, and make sure you know how much water is available during the driest season.

If the property does not already have a well, and there is no other source of water, do not assume that you will be able to get water when you drill a well. I would not purchase such property without sufficient evidence that there is the potential for finding sufficient water within a reasonable depth. Average well depth in a given area can be determined by checking well logs which are on file with the state. Often they can be searched online. Keep in mind however, that well logs can be highly inaccurate in terms of gallons per minute production. This is because the water output listed on well logs is usually based upon an estimate made by the driller, not an actual

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pump test. It has been my experience that drillers are sometimes overly optimistic when estimating well water production. A more accurate method of determining water potential would be to check with neighboring property owners who have a well to find out how their wells are performing. It might also be advisable to purchase such property with a contingency that you are not obligated to buy the property if you do not find a minimum specified amount of water within a specified depth. Even then, consider carefully whether or not you can afford to spend the money to drill with the potential of not finding any water at all.

Thus far, in discussing water, we have only considered the question of quantity. However, just because the land is rural doesn't mean there couldn't be a problem with the quality of the water. If the property already has a water source, it is advisable to have a test to determine that it is free of bacteria and other contaminants such as uranium and arsenic. We know of several families who discovered after the purchase that their water was dangerously high in uranium. This required a special filtration system costing thousands of dollars.

Another potential use for water is in the generation of electricity. If there is a creek, spring, or river on the property, you may be able to install a hydro-electric system. To do this you need sufficient flow and adequate drop in elevation. Keep in mind, however, that some local or state governments may require permits for such systems.

Accessibility

The most ideal country properties provide privacy, which means they will be somewhat remote. (For a discussion of how far out a property should be, see chapter eight.) Such properties are generally more affordable since most people prefer the convenience of being closer

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to populated areas. However, make sure the property is accessible year around. If you are in an area where it snows, find out whether or not the road is maintained or if you would have to do your own plowing in the winter. Mud can also be a problem, either due to rain or spring break-up in colder climates. Roads in the far northern regions can become impassible in the spring thaw, so make sure this will be manageable if you are considering a property in such an area. The only way to really know about these things is to talk to several people living in the same area, preferably on the same access road.

Climate

In my opinion, the most important reason to consider climate has to do with the growing season. Find out when the first and last freeze are each year. You can still grow food, even in colder climates, but you might have to use a greenhouse. I know of one family that has an “indoor” orchard. While these things can be done, it is much easier to be able to grow a significant portion of your food outside.

Other issues to consider relating to climate include wind, humidity, precipitation, and sunshine. While some of these things are a matter of preference, for some people, living in an area where there is cloud cover much of the year becomes almost unbearable. Another reason to consider sunshine and/or wind is related to the possibility of generating your own power using solar panels or wind generators. Go to your local library or use the internet to research these climate related issues.

Location

How is the property situated? Who owns the properties bordering the piece you’re looking at? Is there a privacy buffer along all

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boundaries of the property? (Generally that would come in the form of trees located on the property you would be purchasing.) It is most ideal to border national or state forests. Large logging interests have often been considered to be good for bordering property owners, but keep in mind that they can at any time come in and log their land, possibly even clear cutting their property. Consider how such an event might affect the property under consideration.

It is also important to consider the slope of the property. Ideally, you want a south facing slope for better growing, and household warmth in the winter. Properties with a north facing slope can have less sunlight in the winter which can also mean slippery roads, depending on the part of the country.

Another issue relating to location has to do with telephone and power service. Whether or not you decide to live off the grid, it is a good idea to have a way to produce your own electricity, at least in the event of power outage. It can cost many thousands to bring power from the local utility company to a location that is off the grid. The same goes for phone lines. It might be that you can receive cell phone service from such a location. There is also the option of VOIP which utilizes the internet through a satellite system.

Employment

A very important consideration in selecting a country property has to do with the reality of providing for your family. Is the property close enough to a populated area to facilitate employment? While there are many employment opportunities within a reasonable distance to rural areas, in some cases, it might be advisable to be reeducated to enter a different field. We'll discuss that more in the next chapter. Another issue pertains to the discrepancy in wages paid in rural areas

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versus metropolitan areas. It is often the case that some occupations do not command as much pay in less populated areas. It is important to research these things before purchasing country property to avoid either selecting a bad location, or purchasing more than you can feasibly afford without undue hardship.

Government

Certain areas of the country offer more liberty than others, and this should be taken into consideration when contemplating where you want to live. It might surprise some to discover that there can be considerable difference in how these issues are handled in various parts of the country. Some of the questions you should research include:

- What kind of restrictions or fees exist on building and property improvements?
- Are there restrictions for home-schooling in the state or local government?
- Is the area friendly toward home business or self-employment?
- What are the property taxes in the area of interest?

Air

One might suppose that pure fresh air would simply be a given with any rural property. However, this is not necessarily the case. Some areas are especially prone to inversion layers which can trap pollution from nearby metropolitan areas. How serious an issue is this? Consider this statement from the pen of inspiration:

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“Fresh air will prove far more beneficial to sick persons than medicine, and is far more essential to them than their food. They will do better, and will recover sooner, when deprived of food, than when deprived of fresh air” (*Counsels on Health*, p. 55).

It is also a good idea to spend some time researching the EPA website (<http://www.epa.gov/radon/>) to determine which parts of the country have a radon problem. If you are considering purchasing a home with a basement, have it tested for radon prior to purchase as it can be costly to install an air filtration system appropriate for radon removal after the fact. If you will be building in an area known for high radon levels, make sure you follow the guidelines for installing such a system during the building process.

Avoiding Pitfalls

Here are some other important things to consider when purchasing country property. Keeping these points in mind could save you a world of grief...

For the remainder of this chapter, visit the following web site:

<http://backtoenoch.org/out-of-the-cities-the-book.html>

This document is an excerpt from the book:

"Out of the Cities" - by Dave Westbrook