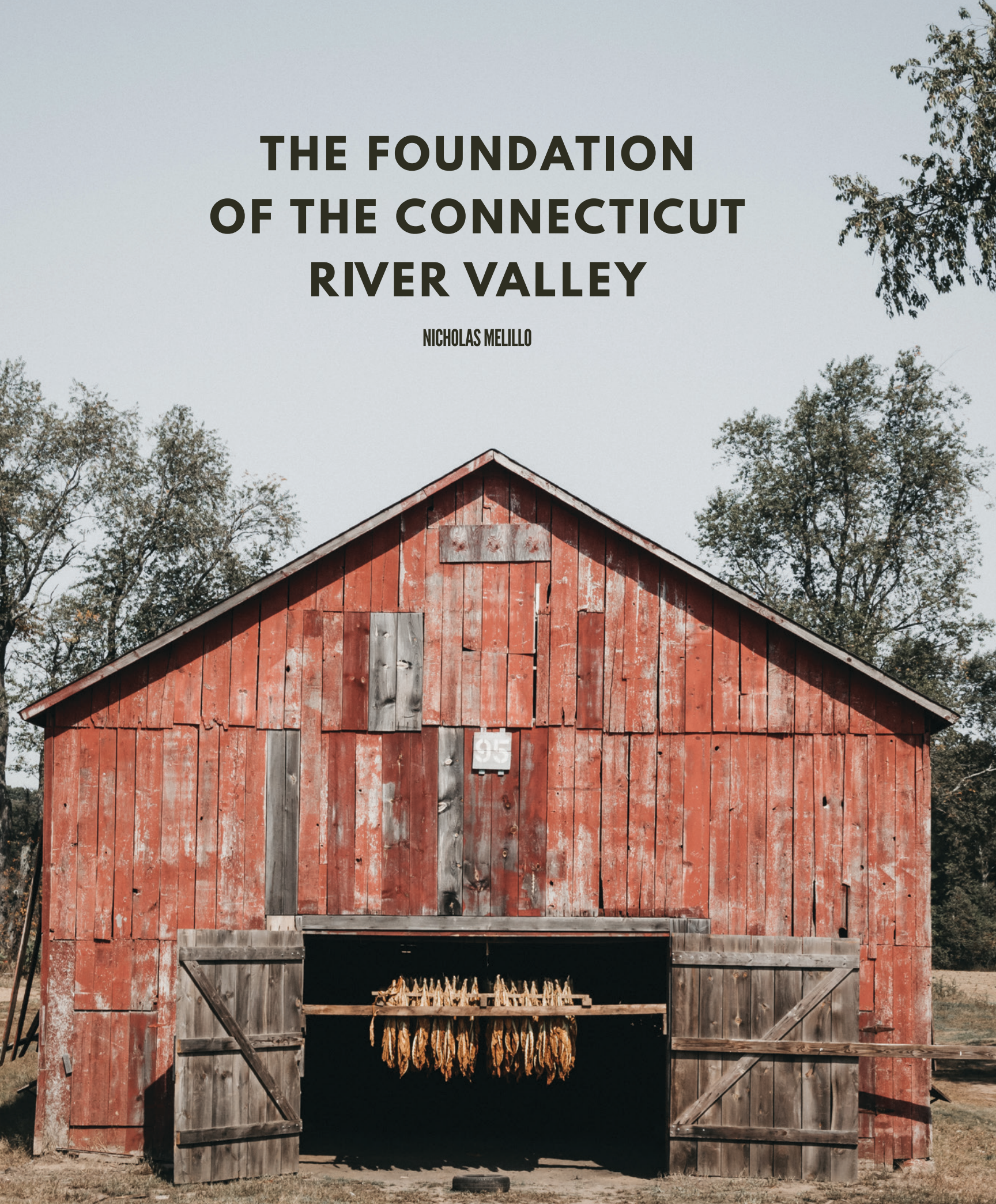


THE FOUNDATION OF THE CONNECTICUT RIVER VALLEY

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Ellington, CT 06.15.22 - When most people think of the state of Connecticut, they rarely think of it as producing some of the best and most respected cigar tobacco in the world. If you are a cigar smoker, you might have seen the word CT Shade or CT Broadleaf on cigar bands, boxes, or tobacco shops. Still, most don't realize the deep and rich history of the Connecticut River Valley that rivals that of Cuba. Before 1959, Cuba and Connecticut had a long history of trading cigar tobacco. Cigars produced in Cuba would use Connecticut seeds, and cigars manufactured in Connecticut would use Cuban filler tobaccos. To this day, Havana Seed is grown in the CT River Valley and Cubans use hybridized varieties of seed called US Type 61, aka CT Shade.

I grew up on Connecticut tobacco lore from my grandfathers, who smoked CT Valley cigars since I could remember. Their fathers smoked cigars manufactured in factories in New Haven, Bridgeport, and Hartford. CT lays claim to the oldest cigar factory in the New World, in Suffield. I did not fully realize the importance of Connecticut tobaccos in the world of cigars until I moved to Esteli, Nicaragua, in 2003. I was 24 years old

and found myself among some of the greatest cigar makers in the world. Most were Cuban artisans who fled Cuba in the 1960s after Fidel Castro had nationalized the tobacco fields and factories. These Cuban master blenders departed Havana looking for similar climates and soils to grow dark air-cured tobaccos, aka cigar tobaccos. Nicaragua, also known as the land of lakes and volcanoes, became many Cuban cigar makers' new home. The fertile, rich volcanic valleys of Esteli and Jalapa mimic those of Vuelta Abajo and Pinar del Rio and yet are unique in their own right.

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As I began my career running a cigar factory in Nicaragua, the Cubans would ask me, "De Donde Eres?" Where are you from? "Soy de Connecticut." I would reply, and their eyes would light up!

I witnessed a tremendous amount of respect for this strange word "Connecticut" that was so familiar to me.

The origins of the word Connecticut derives from the Mohegan-Pequot word "Quinnehtukqut," meaning the "long tidal river." The CT River begins near the border of New Hampshire, flowing southward 406 miles through 4 states, and empties into the long island sound. 15,000 years ago, a large ice sheet covered most of this watershed terrain and eventually melted into a gigantic glacier finger lake known as Lake Hitchcock. After 3,000 years, Lake Hitchcock began to erode, causing it to drain into the Long Island sound and eventually transformed into the Connecticut River. In this lengthy process, the sandy loam of the lakebed settled on 30,000 acres north of Hartford, known today as the CT River Valley.

It is because of this River that Connecticut tobacco is so unique. Most cigar tobacco-growing regions are volcanic, but Connecticut's sandy loam soil created by the Laurentide Ice Sheet left very few rocks than in other areas of New England. On average, the CT River Valley has 33 inches of this topsoil.

