



Meet Patrick Verkley...

Hi, I'm Patrick Verkley, and I'm a farmer from Kerwood Ontario. I have a somewhat unique family history with farming. I'm the 4th generation to have started up a new farming operation. In 1914 My Great Grandparents bought and moved to a new dairy farm in Alphen a.d. Rijn, the Netherlands. In 1949, my Grandparents moved to Canada and later settled on their dairy farm in Kerwood in 1950. In 1998, the family sold off the cows and my Parents started their own broiler chicken farm. Lastly, in 2018 I bought a farm from my parents, built a broiler barn, and started raising my own chickens and field crops under a new operation, Kleijdale Farms.

Farming was always something I wanted to be a part of, but I wasn't always sure how I was going to make that happen. Having a deep interest in buildings and design, I decided to pursue architecture, and graduated with a bachelors of Architectural Studies from the University of Waterloo in 2015. Going through that program, I learned about the power of the built environment to shape opinions, convey messages, and to build communities. As a farm kid, I also got to meet people who grew up in downtown Toronto, Vancouver, and many other very urban places. On my Coop terms, I lived in Toronto, Calgary, and spent a semester studying in Rome. We spend so much time in agriculture complaining about how the consumer doesn't understand farming, but honestly, we farmers don't spend near enough time understanding our customers. We as farmers have massive influence on the shape and feel of our rural landscape, and great power to create a visual story for our customers.

Since returning home, I've been focused on how to reimagine agriculture in a fiscally prudent yet compelling way. I started an agricultural design firm, Verkley Design and Modelling, which works with farmers to help create farm buildings which elevate the importance of process, workflow, labour efficiency, as well as creating a design aesthetic which conveys the pride and dedication that farmers have to their work. I've also become a director on the board of the Middlesex Federation of Agriculture, and sit on the Policy Advisory Committee of the OFA. On my own farm, I designed my broiler barn to include natural light for my chickens. I have also been experimenting with Multi-Species cropping methods such as relay wheat and soybeans, as well as 60" corn with in season cover crops. Every time we drive our planter across the field, we're painting a new picture. We are creating the image that people see, that they experience when they venture out of the city, and we have the power to tell them a new story. I think we should.

