

# The History of the Preservation of Erdenheim Farm

Prepared by

WHITEMARSH



FOUNDATION

# Special Thanks

*When passion meets knowledge, amazing things will happen...*



In the late 1990s, the Whitmarsh community, faced with losing 450 acres of open space in Whitmarsh Township, was in need of a leader who would lay forth a vision and roadmap for how to execute what was at the time, a young initiative, to preserve in perpetuity the historic land and structures that comprise Erdenheim Farm. Hugh Moulton, was that leader.

An established, respected attorney and corporate executive, Hugh, a longtime resident of Whitmarsh Township and someone who cares deeply about environmental conservation brought decades of legal expertise and personal passion to the project. He led the efforts of the preservation plan, that 16 years later has developed a small corner of our township into a living laboratory of meadow management and open space preservation best practices. In helping to establish the Whitmarsh Foundation in 2001, Hugh served as the Founding Chairman and remains active on the board today as Secretary Treasurer.

Ever the diplomat, Hugh forged bonds with like-minded private and public partners in preservation and helped secure the future of the Whitmarsh Foundation. With thanks to many people including Edith Dixon and Peter and Bonnie McCausland who have helped bring this vision to life—the Foundation would not be who we are today were it not for the shared common goal of open space for generations to come.

With our deepest gratitude for his vision and leadership, we thank Hugh for writing *The History of the Preservation of Erdenheim Farm* to celebrate the hard work and commitment of the many constituents who made this remarkable goal a reality.

*Anthony J. Maginnis*  
Chairman

*Kimberly G. Sheppard*  
President

## INTRODUCTION

# A Legacy Shared by All

*On the outskirts of Philadelphia, one does not need to look far to see the significant role preservation plays in our community. With a rich history and incredible protected environment, Northwest Philadelphia—and its landscape and period architecture—tells the story of our nation's early years.*

The Whitemarsh Foundation is proud to play a small but significant role in that story. Established in 2001 the Foundation is dedicated to the preservation, conservation and stewardship of open space in the Whitemarsh Valley, and oversees nearly 200 acres of preserved land just beyond the Philadelphia City limits at Erdenheim Farm, on what was and remains a gentleman's farm.

The history of the Foundation's land and Dixon Meadow House—restored in 2016—dates back to the late 1700s with the land belonging to a man named John Wilson. By the mid 1800s period maps show the Farmhouse at 548 Flourtown Road owned by William Coulson and later his two daughters who never married. The Farm was sold to George Dunton Widener Jr. just prior to World War I. The land was acquired by Mr. Widener's nephew Fitz Eugene Dixon Jr., who bred thoroughbreds and farmed the land upon which the farmhouse stands for over 35 years, protecting the land from repeated offers from land developers. In 2005, a tract of about 50 acres was sold for the erection of the Hill at Whitemarsh. This transaction led to the Whitemarsh Foundation's initiative for the preservation of Erdenheim Farm. The McCausland family became interested in the preservation of the farm, as well, and acquired approximately 250 acres in June 2009, which they now call home.

The entire 450 acre Farm is now protected from all but the most limited development in perpetuity.

Today, the efforts of the Whitemarsh Foundation are appreciated by the community at large. The 14-acre Dixon Meadow Preserve—completed in 2014—earned a 2015 Montgomery County Award for successful community collaboration, sustainable site design, and habitat creation, and in 2016 the Dixon Meadow House opened its doors to its first education classes held in connection with the Morris Arboretum, Whitemarsh Township Parks and Recreation Department and William Jeannes Memorial Library.

This History of the Preservation of Erdenheim Farm chronicles the journey of the Whitemarsh Foundation's inception and celebrates the many pivotal partnerships that brought it to life.



# Whitemarsh Foundation Timeline



**Inception of Whitemarsh Foundation, 501 C-3 created with the initial mission of preserving Erdenheim Farm.**



**Whitemarsh Foundation Purchases Angus Tract, 98 acre parcel abutting the Hill at Whitemarsh.**



**Whitemarsh Foundation Purchases Sheep Tract, 91 acre parcel located between Flourtown Road and Stenton Avenue.**



**Dedication of the Dixon Meadow Preserve, the 14 acre nature preserve and boardwalk to serve as a living laboratory for the study of meadow management and best practices.**



**Launch of “Open the Door” Capital Campaign, funds to be used to renovate the mid-19th century Farmhouse at 548 Flourtown Road.**



**Completion of the renovation of the Dixon Meadow House, a learning center for meadow management education programs and the formal Whitemarsh Foundation Headquarters.**





# To Preserve Open Space

*In a series of complex transactions in 2008 and 2009, Erdenheim Farm was preserved as open space in perpetuity, the culmination of nearly 10 years of intense effort by the Whitemarsh Foundation, community groups and state and local governments. This short history records those efforts and the steps subsequently taken to preserve and maintain this unique community treasure.*

## Development of the Hill at Whitemarsh

In the late 1990s, a group of area residents began work with Whitemarsh Retirement Partners, to plan for the development of a continuing care retirement community to be located in Lafayette Hill, comparable to the upscale Main Line retirement communities of Beaumont and Waverly. The principal of Whitemarsh Retirement Partners was John Fleming, whose family for many years had extensive experience in the ownership and operation of psychiatric hospitals in the Philadelphia area. A significant number of these area residents made investments in Whitemarsh Retirement Partners to provide needed seed capital, and were referred to as “Founders.”<sup>1</sup> Additional capital was subsequently raised from another group of potential residents known as “Sponsors”.

The preferred location was a 44 acre site on Thomas Road in Whitemarsh Township, between holes 7 and 8 of the Whitemarsh Valley Country Club, a residential subdivision known as Whitemarsh Valley Farms, and Erdenheim Farm. This site was the location of Eugenia Hospital, a psychiatric hospital in failing circumstances which was in the process of discontinuing operations. Fleming had acquired an option to purchase the property and was prepared to dedicate its use for the proposed community to be known as The Hill at Whitemarsh.

However, the 44 acre site was too small for the proposed facility, and the developer and several Founders approached Fitz

Eugene Dixon, Jr. the owner of Erdenheim Farm, for an option to purchase 54 acres of the adjoining “Angus Tract” to complete a 100-acre site for the proposed project.

Erdenheim Farm<sup>2</sup> was then a 500 acre working farm which had been in continuous agricultural use since the days of William Penn, the centerpiece of 2000 acres of nearly contiguous open space between Fairmont Park in Philadelphia and Fort Washington State Park in Whitemarsh. Mr. Dixon’s uncle George D. Widener Jr. had purchased the Farm in 1916, and it was acquired by Mr. Dixon on his uncle’s death in 1971. The Farm consisted of five separate parcels: the 152 acre “Angus Tract”; the 108 acre “Sheep Tract”; the 103 acre “Equestrian Tract”; the 114 acre “Wissahickon Tract”; and the 23 acre “Residence Tract” which included the estate residence, office, green houses, indoor tennis court and other residential buildings. The Wissahickon Tract had been left by George Widener to the Natural Lands Trust, subject to a life estate in favor of Mr. Dixon.<sup>3</sup> The Farm had been meticulously maintained by the Widener and Dixon families at considerable expense for the previous 80 years, much to the enjoyment and pleasure of generations of area residents. Both the Widener and Dixon families had consistently refused to consider the many offers they received to sell the property for residential development. Accordingly, the Dixon family made a major commitment to the proposed community when Mr. Dixon agreed to grant the requested option.

Although the Eugenia Hospital site was zoned Institutional, the Farm was zoned residential. Accordingly, Whitmarsh Retirement Partners filed an application with Whitmarsh Township to change the zoning to a “Continuing Care Retirement Community District” in August 2000. Accompanying the application was a proposed plan which included a large congregate building with apartments and health care units, cottages and villas all accommodating several hundred residents. The Community was to be fronted on



Flourtown and Thomas Roads with an entrance at that intersection.

The proposed zoning change was initially strongly opposed by several community groups, including the Whitemarsh Township Residents Association, the Whitemarsh Valley Farms Community Association and the Whitemarsh Valley Country Club. The stated objections were traffic and density, but the underlying concern was that Erdenheim Farm, which many generations had enjoyed and largely taken for granted, was now in their view, “in play”. Applications for zoning changes in Whitemarsh Township are first reviewed by the Planning Commission before submission to the Board of Supervisors for approval. Accordingly, in March 2001 a hearing was held before the Planning Commission attended by several hundred area residents opposing the project, resulting in the Commission on March 31, 2001 unanimously recommending against the zoning change.

Thereafter, between April and November 2001, Whitemarsh Retirement Partners and the Community Groups engaged in extensive negotiations resulting in an historic agreement in December 2001, referred to as the “Community Agreement”, a model of developer/community cooperation. Under the terms of the Community Agreement, the community groups agreed to drop their opposition and support the zoning change, and Whitemarsh Retirement Partners agreed to the following:

- *A 10% reduction in the number of residential units*
- *Relocation of the Community away from Flourtown and Thomas Roads so that no structure would be any closer to the roads than 1500 feet*
- *Preservation of 12 acres of woods to serve as a buffer between the development and an adjacent residential neighborhood*
- *Granting of an option by Mr. Dixon to sell the adjacent remaining 98 acres of the “Angus Tract” following his death*
- *Creation of a new non-profit Foundation to raise the funding needed to exercise the option and to preserve as much of the rest of the Farm as possible*

- *Upon closing of its financing the Hill agreed to contribute \$500,000 to the Foundation and \$330 dollars annually thereafter for each occupied independent living unit. On closing of the financing for a potential second phase, the Hill agreed to contribute an additional \$500,000 to the Foundation*

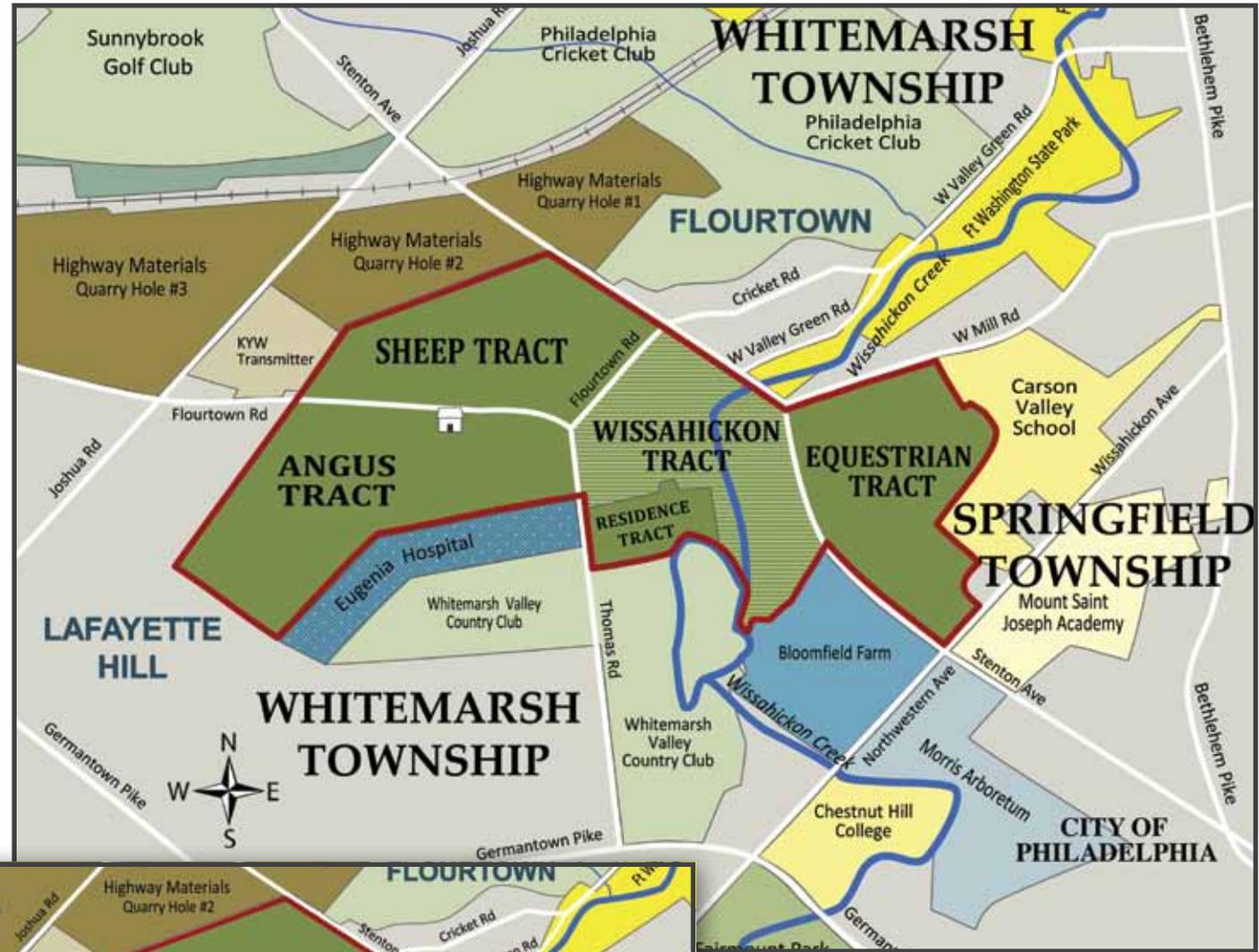
On December 18, 2001, Whitemarsh Retirement Partners refiled the zoning application with the revised development plan, and hearings were held by the Planning Commission on February 26, 2002. The revised application was supported by the parties to the Community Agreement and letters of support were submitted by the Morris Arboretum, Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association, Plymouth Meeting Historical Society, Whitemarsh Township Residents Association, Fort Washington State Park and the Founders of the Hill at Whitemarsh. On March 21, 2002 an editorial in the Philadelphia Inquirer supported the project.

On May 16, 2002, the Whitemarsh Township Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to approve the zoning change as had been recommended by the Planning Commission.

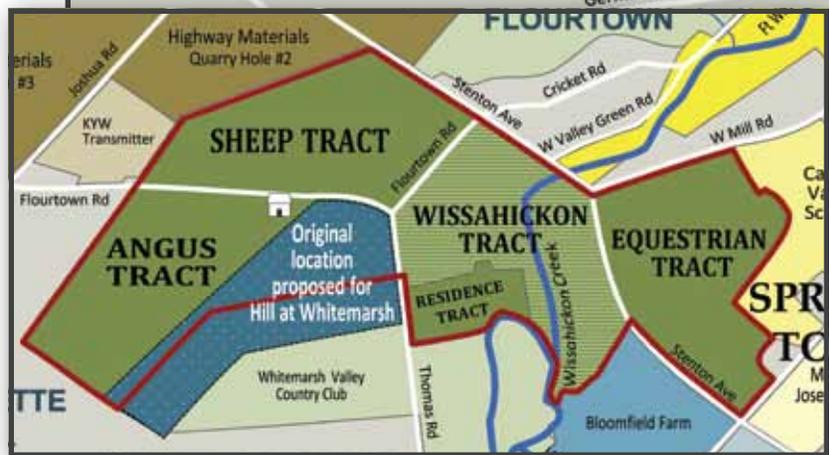
Between May 2002 and February 2005 Whitemarsh Retirement Partners completed and obtained Township approval of the detailed development plans; undertook extensive marketing and sales efforts with the result that deposits were received for over 89% of the independent living units; and arranged financing for the project.

In February 2005 closing of the financing was completed, the options to purchase the site were exercised and Whitemarsh Retirement Partners transferred the project to The Hill at Whitemarsh, a newly formed independent tax exempt public charity. At closing of the financing, Whitemarsh Retirement Partners transferred the Angus Tract option to the Whitemarsh Foundation and contributed \$500,000 to the Foundation as required under the Community Agreement. Construction commenced shortly thereafter and the Hill opened with the first residents moving in in March 2007.

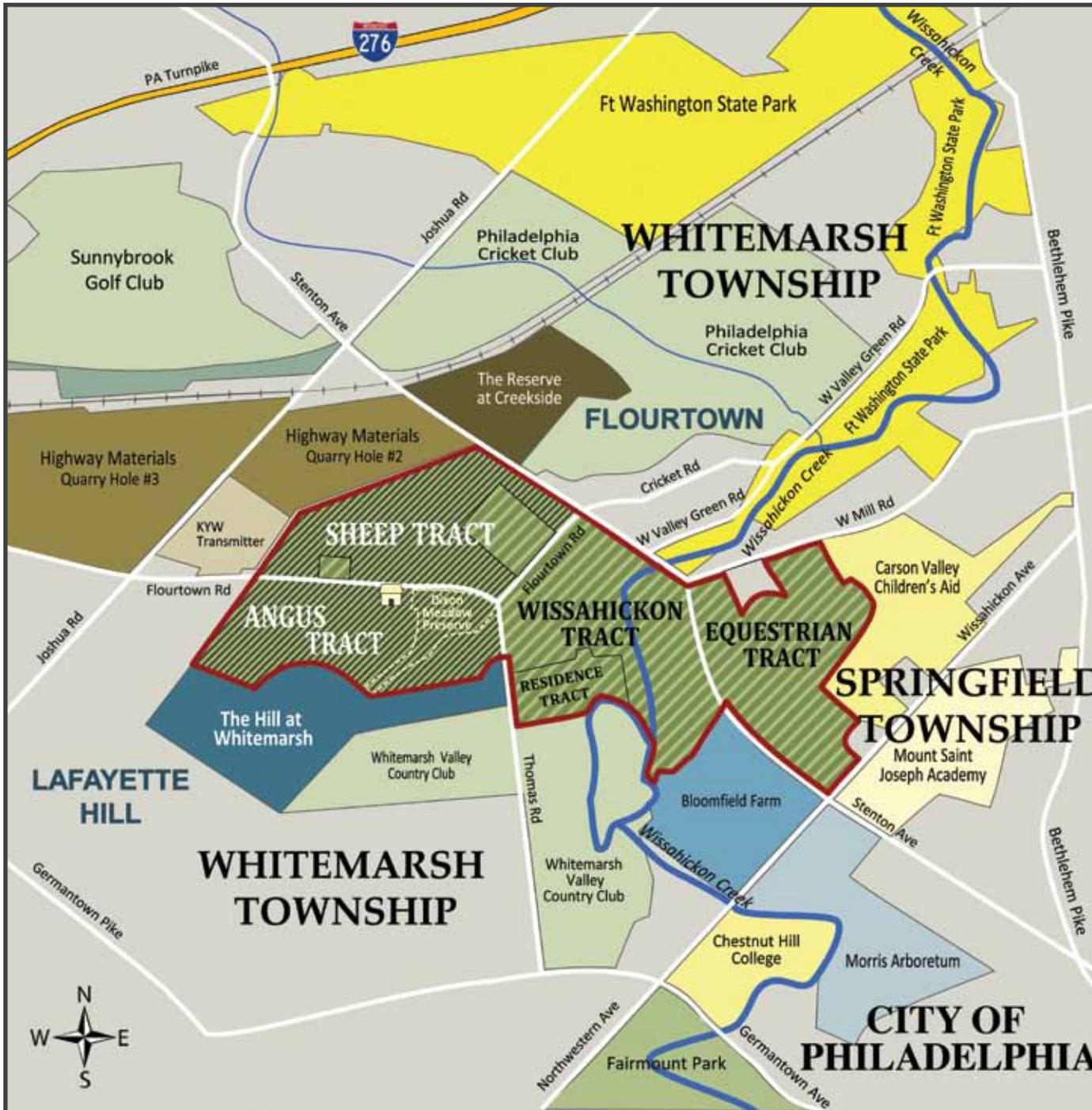
Erdenheim Farm:  
2000



Hill at Whitemarsh:  
Original Proposed Development



# Erdenheim Farm: Current Ownership





# Whitemarsh Foundation

*The Whitemarsh Foundation was incorporated on June 21, 2001 as a Pennsylvania non-profit corporation. It was granted exemption from taxation under section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code on August 26, 2003.<sup>4</sup>*

As provided by the Community Agreement, its governing board was comprised of three members to be appointed by the Hill at Whitemarsh, two members by the Whitemarsh Township Residents Association, two members by the Whitemarsh Valley Farms Community Association, and one member by the Whitemarsh Valley Country Club. The Executive Director of the Morris Arboretum was appointed as the ninth member of the Board.

The first meeting of the Board of Directors of the Foundation<sup>5</sup> was held on January 25, 2002 at which officers<sup>6</sup> were elected and a mission statement adopted. The Foundation's mission was three-fold in nature: first, protect Erdenheim Farm from development; second, to preserve the views of the Farm from area roads; third, to continue some form of agricultural operations on the Farm.

The initial focus of the Foundation concerned the option which Mr. Dixon granted to purchase the remaining 98 acre portion of the Angus Tract, between the Hill development and Flourtown and Thomas Roads. The option became exercisable on the death of Mr. Dixon and for six months thereafter at a price equal to fair market value on the date of death, but not less than \$105,000 per acre, or just over \$10 million. The Foundation estimated that preservation of the entire Farm could involve as much as \$50 million.

In January 2003, the Foundation engaged Shultz & Williams, a fundraising consulting firm, to determine the feasibility of raising funds necessary to acquire the Angus Tract and to protect the remaining portions of the Farm. Following the completion of

over 30 planning study interviews, Shultz & Williams issued its Campaign Planning Study in September 2003. Although there was widespread and near unanimous support for preserving the Farm from development, most interviewees were of the view that there were too many questions which needed to be answered before they would support a fundraising campaign. Accordingly Schultz & Williams recommended that the Foundation first seek funding from public sources including federal, state and local entities for acquisition, subsequently soliciting private funds for stewardship.

As recommended by Schultz & Williams, the Foundation then began researching possible sources of public funding and actively solicited support from a number of different public open space funding sources. Between 2003 and 2009, the Foundation solicited funding under the programs listed below.

## Tax Increment Financing (TIF)

This is a type of program authorized by state law in all 50 states. A redevelopment project in a blighted area normally will result in increased employment and increased tax revenues reflecting the higher value of the new project compared with the existing value. With the approval of the local taxing authorities, the tax increments (the amount by which the new real estate taxes exceed the existing taxes) may be set aside generally for 20 years and used to provide debt service on a bond issue to help pay for the project. This provides developers a meaningful incentive to invest in redevelopment.





The attorney for Whitemarsh Retirement Partners, Jeff Rotwitt, proposed that this type of financing be utilized for the Hill at Whitemarsh, the failing Eugenia Hospital constituting the “blight”. This proposal was innovative and extremely creative because the proceeds would not be used to support the construction of the project, but to help fund the acquisition of the adjacent Angus and Sheep Tracts of Erdenheim Farm. Preservation of these tracts as open space was thought to be necessary in order to assure success in the Hill’s marketing and sales efforts. This would be the first time that tax increment financing had been used to fund open space preservation anywhere in the country. In addition to sponsorship by the Montgomery County Redevelopment Authority, the creation of a “Tax Increment Financing District” required the approval of the governing bodies of the three taxing districts involved: Montgomery County; Whitemarsh Township; and the Colonial School District. Support by the School District was of critical importance since school taxes account for about 75% of the total tax levy. The TIF District was to include the property being purchased by the Hill and the Angus and Sheep Tract portions of Erdenheim Farm. Township approval in October 2003 initiated the complex process of creating the “TIF District”, completing the required documentation, and securing approval by the taxing authorities.

In order to demonstrate that the proposed TIF District included a “blighted” area, The Redevelopment Authority engaged Mullin & Longeran, a consulting firm. On January 27, 2004, the Whitemarsh Township Planning Commission approved Miller & Longeran’s finding that due to the failing Eugenia Hospital, the District was “blighted” and on February 11, 2004 the County Planning Commission adopted a concurring resolution.

After numerous meetings and hearings, all of the required documentation was agreed upon by the Redevelopment Authority, the County, Township and School District during the fall of 2004. The last step necessary to give final approval was taken by the Whitemarsh Township Board of Supervisors on November

18, 2004. It was then estimated that the “tax increments” (the amount by which the taxes paid by the Hill would exceed the amounts previously paid by Eugenia Hospital and Mr. Dixon on the 54 acres transferred to the Hill), would approximate \$1 million annually. Of these increments, the Township and County agreed to allocate 100% to the TIF and the School District approximately 83%. The TIF became effective in 2003 and terminates in 2023. These “increments” were to become available to provide debt service on bonds to be issued by the Redevelopment Authority if and when the Foundation purchased the Angus and Sheep Tracts. This innovative and remarkable result was due to hard work of Jeff Rotwitt, John Fleming, the Community Groups and the Foundation, among others.

## Montgomery County Open Space Program

On February 20, 2003, the Montgomery County Commissioners announced a new \$150 million 10 year open space program, subject to voter approval at a referendum to be held in November 2003.

The Green Futures Action Committee, led by the former Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection was formed to mobilize voter support for the referendum. In November 2003, the voters approved the adoption of the Open Space Plan with a plurality of 78% voting in favor of the Plan.

The Plan authorized the County to provide grants to private non-profit organizations for up to 50% of the cost of worthwhile open space projects as approved by the Board of Commissioners. In May 2006, the Foundation met with the Chairman of the

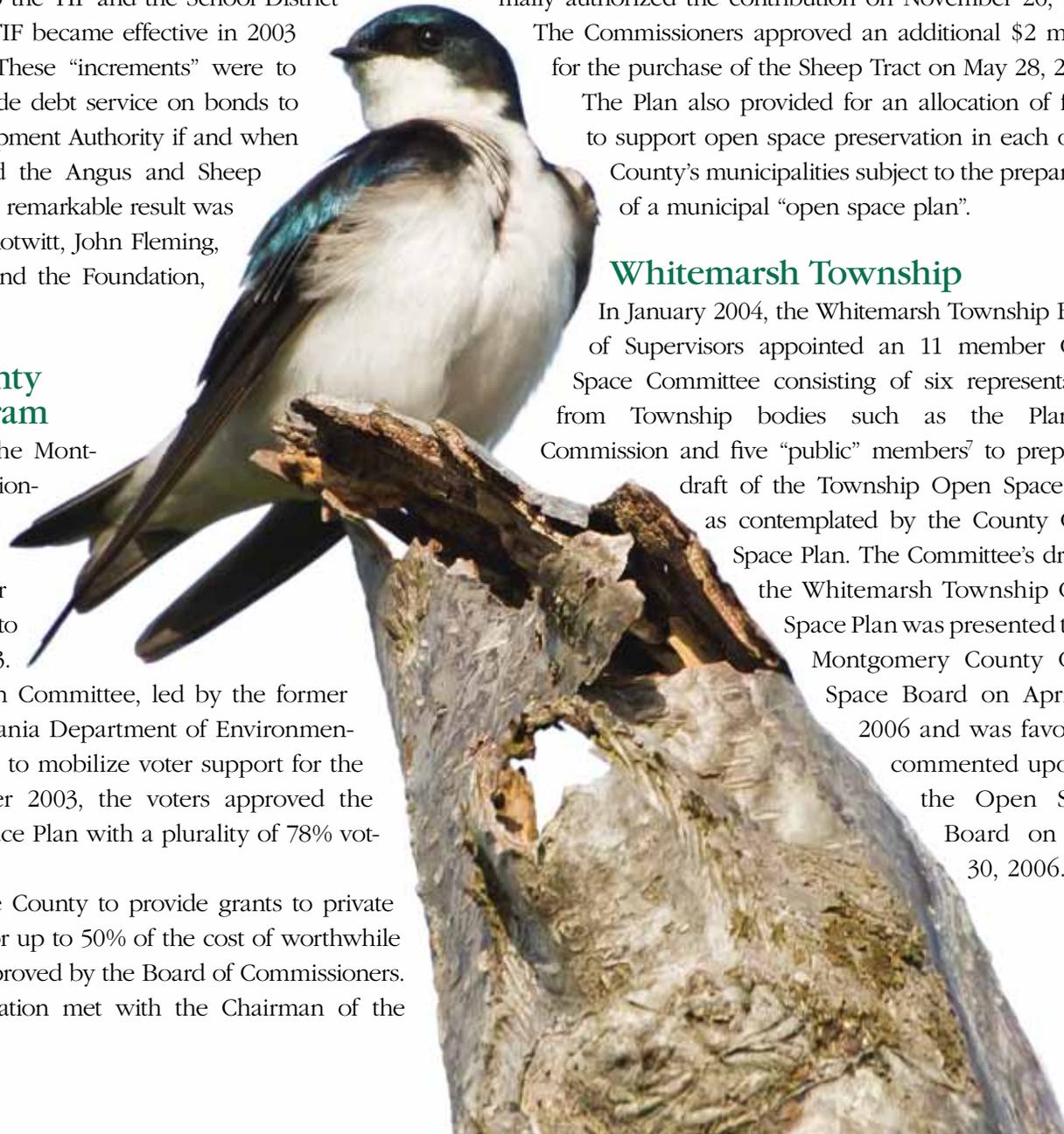
Montgomery County Commissioners and made application for grants to be applied toward the purchase price of the Angus and Sheep Tracts if and when they became available for purchase. On March 8, 2007, the Commissioners announced a commitment to provide \$2 million of funding for the Angus Tract and formally authorized the contribution on November 26, 2008.

The Commissioners approved an additional \$2 million for the purchase of the Sheep Tract on May 28, 2009.

The Plan also provided for an allocation of funds to support open space preservation in each of the County’s municipalities subject to the preparation of a municipal “open space plan”.

## Whitemarsh Township

In January 2004, the Whitemarsh Township Board of Supervisors appointed an 11 member Open Space Committee consisting of six representatives from Township bodies such as the Planning Commission and five “public” members<sup>7</sup> to prepare a draft of the Township Open Space Plan as contemplated by the County Open Space Plan. The Committee’s draft of the Whitemarsh Township Open Space Plan was presented to the Montgomery County Open Space Board on April 11, 2006 and was favorably commented upon by the Open Space Board on May 30, 2006.





The Plan was given final approval by the Board of Supervisors on December 21, 2006. Significantly, the Plan identified as a priority action: “Preserve 100% of Erdenheim Farm, the Township’s only remaining working farm and an important link to the area’s rural past.”

Importantly, the Plan also recommended that the Township develop “a dedicated funding stream to support the Township’s open space access and acquisition goals” to supplement amounts which may become available from County, State and federal programs. In July 2006, the Open Space Committee made a proposal to the Board of Supervisors to place a referendum on the November ballot to authorize a special 1/4 of 1% earned income tax to preserve open space as authorized by state law (“Act 153”). This technique had been used for this purpose by many municipalities in Southeastern Pennsylvania in recent years. The Committee estimated that this special tax would generate about \$1.1 million annually for open space and could serve as a source of debt service for a bond issue if an appropriate open space opportunity arose.

On August 3, 2006, the Supervisors unanimously voted to place the referendum on the November ballot. Thereafter, the Whitemarsh Township Residents Association and the Foundation supported the formation of a political action committee which raised funds and promoted passage of the referendum.

In November 2006, the Township voters approved the referendum by a plurality of 62% of those voting. On December 14, 2006, the Supervisors formally adopted the tax effective January 1, 2007. The Township estimated that the tax would provide debt service at current borrowing rates for an \$18 million bond issue. On April 26, 2007, the Foundation made formal application to the Board of Supervisors for funding for the preservation of the Angus Tract in the amount of \$3.5 million, being \$36,000 for each acre protected. This amount was premised on the assumption that the Township would be prepared to devote one half of total Act 153 resources, or \$9 million, to preservation of the Farm. Dividing the \$9 million

by the number of unprotected farm acres in the Township produced a per acre contribution of \$36,000.

In September 2007, the Whitemarsh Supervisors announced a grant of \$1.9 million for the Angus purchase out of Act 153 monies, it appearing that sufficient funds from other sources would be available to complete the purchase.

In August 2008, the Foundation applied for \$8 million of Act 153 funding for the purchase of the Sheep Tract and on September 25 the Board of Supervisors authorized a grant of \$10.5 million for both Angus and Sheep tracts, superseding the prior \$1.9 million grant for Angus.

## DCNR’s Growing Greener II

The Pennsylvania Department of Natural Resources funds a program known as “Growing Greener II” under which it provides matching funds for open space preservation. Grants under this program were conditioned on providing public access and restricting use of property being preserved having a value double the amount of the grant. With the assistance of the Natural Lands Trust and Montgomery County, application was made for Growing Greener Funding for the purchase of the Angus Tract. In July 2007, DCNR announced a \$1 million grant for the Angus Tract purchase to be funded out of the Growing Greener II program.

## Merck Spill

On June 13, 2006, Merck & Co accidentally discharged toxic chemicals into the Wissahickon Creek from its plant in West Point, Pennsylvania, in violation of federal and state law. This discharge killed hundreds of fish in the Creek and caused the Philadelphia Water Department to close its drinking water intakes on the Schuylkill downstream from the confluence of the Wissahickon Creek and the Schuylkill. The United States Department of Environmental Protection and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection thereafter brought suit in federal Court to enjoin the violation and for related relief.

Following negotiations, the litigation was settled and the parties entered into a Consent Decree which included the payment by Merck of \$9 million to fund “Supplemental Environmental Projects” to improve environmental health in the Wissahickon watershed. With the assistance of Mike Gerber, a member of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives whose District included Whitemarsh Township, the Foundation applied for grants to help fund the purchase of the Angus Tract, and for the construction of a stormwater mitigation facility on the Tract. These projects would benefit the Wissahickon Creek by reducing the stormwater and effluent runoff from the development of the Angus Tract which would otherwise likely occur.



### Planning for Uses of the Farm

The Foundation Board recognized that in soliciting funds for acquisition of the Angus Tract, it would be necessary to identify potential uses of the tract after acquisition, and that a professional land planning firm should be hired to develop alternatives. In February 2005, a Request for Proposal was prepared and sent to a number of reputable firms and on April 26, 2005 meet-

ings were held with representatives of Andropogon Associates, LandConcepts and the Heritage Conservancy. On May 18, 2005, the Board accepted the LandConcepts proposal.

In December 2005, LandConcepts and the Foundation met with Mr. Dixon and the farm manager, followed by a tour of the farm in January 2006. In July 2006, LandConcepts met with the Foundation Board and presented three alternative uses for the

Angus Tract: first, a meadow preserve under which the entire tract would be planted in grassland, with a wet meadow in the lower portion; second, a sheep farm on the upper portions raised primarily for meat and a meadow preserve in the lower portion; third, an agri-business mix in the upper portion, such as a vineyard, tree farm, organic farm or community supported agriculture, with a meadow preserve in the lower portion. LandConcepts also mentioned the possibility of building a farm pond in the lower meadow to restrain stormwater runoff, recharge the aquifer and provide habitat for waterfowl.

### Death of Mr. Dixon

On August 2, 2006, Mr. Dixon passed away after a short illness. Dixon left the Equestrian Tract to his daughter Ellin Dixon Miller. The rest of the Farm was left to a Trust. Although the beneficiaries of the Trust were not a matter of public record, the Foundation believed that they included one or more charities. This imposed an obligation on the Trustees<sup>8</sup> to realize not less than fair market value on any disposition of other portions of the Farm. The Trustees, were, however, in favor of preserving the Farm from development if fair market value could be realized on a sale.

### Conservation Buyers

The Foundation and the Trustees recognized that if possible it would be desirable to find a conservation buyer who would be interested in acquiring all of the Farm, including the 23 acre Residence Tract, subject to easements which would protect the Farm from development. As the Foundation considered alternatives, it became clear that the participation of the Natural Lands Trust (NLT), owner of the fee of the 114 acre Wissahickon Tract, would be key to interesting a conservation buyer. Since the Wissahickon Tract abutted the Residence Tract, a buyer would take comfort in the fact that the Wissahickon Tract would not be developed. However, since the residence itself was within 100 feet of the NLT property, a buyer would have understandable concern as to the

uses to which the Tract would be put, and would want to exercise full control over the property. Much to its credit, NLT recognized that ceding control to a conservation buyer could create an opportunity to protect other parts of the Farm. Accordingly, NLT determined that it would be willing to sell the Wissahickon Tract to a conservation buyer acquiring all or most of the Farm, subject not only to easements protecting the Wissahickon Tract, but also easements protecting the other portions of the Farm as well.

The underlying concept was that in order to preserve the Farm from development, the Foundation would purchase the development rights and the buyer would purchase the fee subject to the easements restricting development. The price paid for the development rights plus the price paid by the conservation buyer would equal the fair market value of the property unencumbered by any restrictions on development. However, since the Foundation funding sources included public bodies, it would be necessary to permit some form of limited public access.

In 2006 and 2007, the Trust engaged in discussions with several potential conservation buyers. Although the buyers were serious and qualified, it appeared that for a variety of reasons none of the buyers were prepared to meet the terms of sale.

In November 2008, the Foundation met with Peter and Bonnie McCausland who were considering a possible transaction under which they would purchase the Residence Tract and 18 acres of the Sheep Tract from the Trust; the major portion of the Equestrian Tract from Ellin Dixon Miller; and the Wissahickon Tract from the Natural Lands Trust. The purchase of the Equestrian and Wissahickon Tracts would be subject to easements limiting all but the most limited development. The transaction would also be subject to the Foundation acquiring the remaining 91 acres of the Sheep Tract and entering into a long-term lease arrangement with the McCauslands for nominal consideration, which would give the McCauslands the ownership or control of all of the Farm except a minor portion of the Equestrian Tract to be retained by Ellin Dixon Miller, and the Angus Tract.

Although the McCauslands initially had no interest in the Angus Tract, they subsequently indicated that they would consider raising black angus cattle on the Angus Tract, provided that the Foundation would be willing to enter into an appropriate arrangement. Under this arrangement, the McCauslands would provide maintenance and stewardship of the Angus Tract on behalf of the Foundation and would be permitted to use the Tract for breeding and raising of cattle. This arrangement would contemplate the Foundation paying the McCauslands for the stewardship and maintenance services.

## Purchase of Angus & Sheep Tracts

The Angus Tract was purchased by the Foundation on December 19, 2008 for a total of \$14,213,346 consisting of the purchase price of \$13,500,000 and transaction costs of \$713,346. The funding came from seven different sources including the Montgomery County Redevelopment Authority as holder of TIF funds collected to date, the purchaser of the TIF Notes, Merck, Whitmarsh Township, Pennsylvania Department of Natural Resources, Montgomery County and the Foundation.

At closing, the Township, County, Colonial School District and the Foundation entered into an agreement, the "Declaration of Conservation and Open Space, Easements, Covenants and Restrictions", which was filed of record and which governed the restrictions and uses of the property and defined the rights and obligations of the parties to the Declaration. The Declaration<sup>9</sup> included provisions which:

- *Prohibited any additional residential or commercial development other than farm buildings and the existing two farmhouses*
- *Granted an easement to the Township for the construction of a trail around the perimeter of the property.*



- *Granted the School District exclusive use of a 2-acre parcel including a 19th century farmhouse for educational uses and an adjacent 1-acre parcel for a student garden*
- *Set aside a 14 acre parcel for a nature preserve and stormwater retention facility*
- *Included detailed provisions concerning permitted and prohibited uses of the property.*
  - *The Dixon Estate was granted the right to continue the use of the Angus Tract free of charge until the disposition of the remaining portions of the Farm.*

On June 1, 2009 the Foundation purchased 91 acres of the Sheep Tract for a total of \$13,180,000 consisting of the purchase price of \$12,500,000 and \$680,000 of transaction costs. At closing, the Township, County, School District and Foundation entered into a similar Declaration which:

- *Prohibited any residential or commercial development in addition to the residence located on the property*
  - *Granted an easement to the County for construction of a public trail along the KYW and quarry property line and along Stenton Avenue to the intersection with Flourtown Road*

- *Included detailed provisions concerning permitted and prohibited uses of the property*

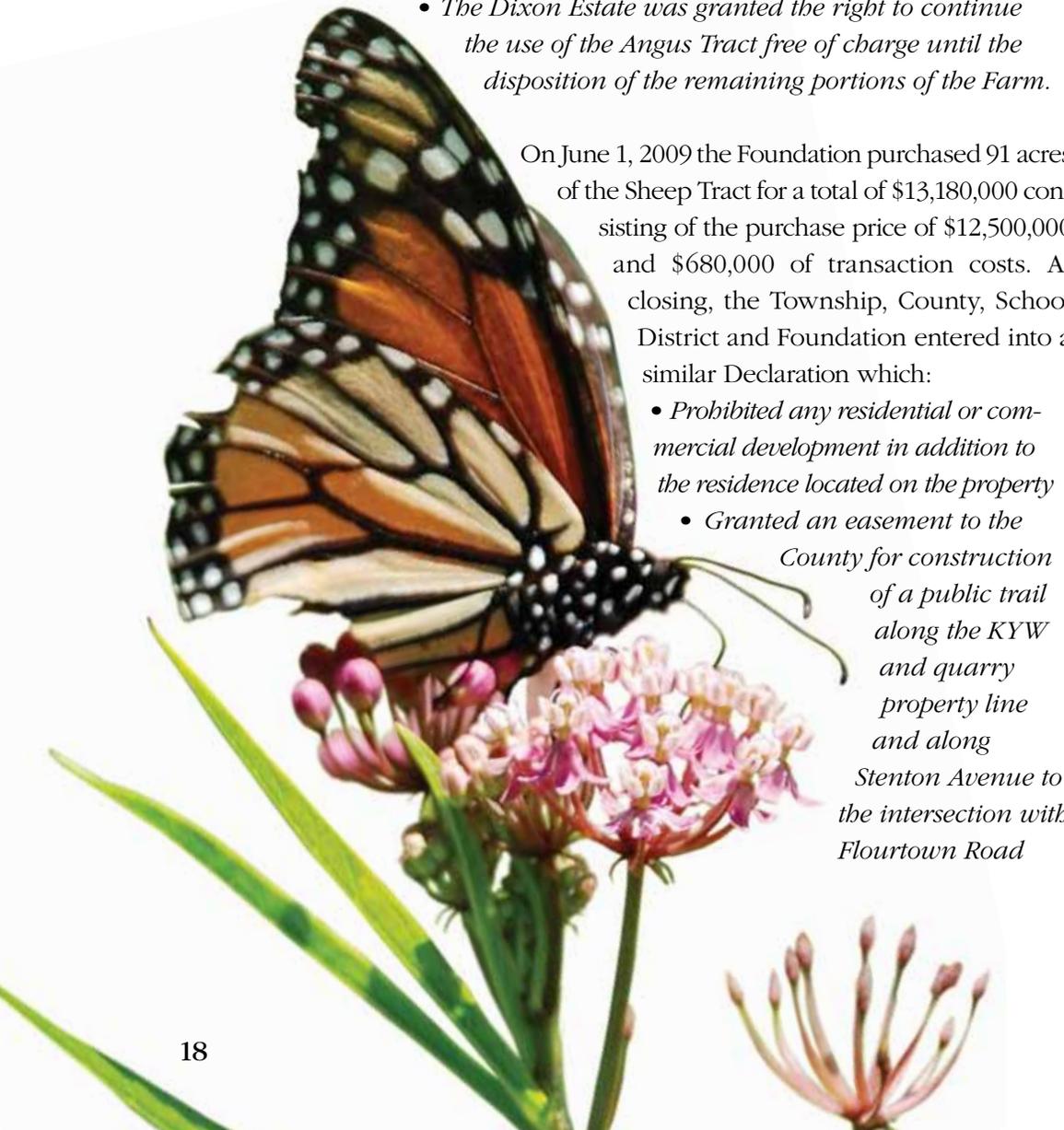
At the same time, the McCauslands purchased:

- *The remaining 18 acres of the Sheep Tract containing the principal farm buildings from the Dixon Estate, subject to restrictions limiting the total number of residences to seven (an increase of three over the then current four).*
- *Approximately 88 acres of the Equestrian Tract from Ellin Dixon Miller who retained ownership of 15 acres containing one residence, subject to easements preventing all but the most limited development (not more than five residences) and a trail easement along Stenton Avenue to connect the existing trail terminating at Stenton and Northwestern Avenues with the trail ending at Stenton Avenue and West Valley Green Road*
- *The Wissabickon Tract from Natural Lands Trust subject to environmental restrictions and limiting development to no more than the two residences then on the property and a trail easement along a short section of Stenton Avenue south from Flourtown Road to West Valley Green Road.*
- *The 23-acre Residence Tract, containing the main estate residence, tennis court, greenhouses and apartments*

As a result of these complex transactions which closed on December 19, 2008 and June 1, 2009, the entire Farm was preserved as open space and protected from all but the most limited development.

## Stewardship of the Angus & Sheep Tracts

In purchasing the Angus and Sheep Tract portions of the Farm, the Foundation recognized that it was assuming a major responsibility to provide appropriate management of the properties and to carry on the exceptional stewardship of the Widener-Dixon families. In addition to its goal of protecting the Farm from development and preserving the special views,



the Foundation also hoped to be able to continue some form of agricultural operations on the property. In purchasing the remaining portions of the Farm, the McCauslands anticipated continuing use of the Equestrian Tract for horse operations and the Sheep Tract for raising sheep. They also expressed the desire to continue raising Angus cattle on the Angus tract.

The Foundation determined that it would advance its mission to engage the McCauslands to manage the Angus Tract on its behalf under an arrangement which would also permit the McCauslands to use the Tract for the cattle operation. And as previously mentioned, the Foundation agreed to lease the 91 acres of the Sheep Tract to the McCauslands for their farm operations.

Accordingly on June 1, 2009, the Foundation entered into a long-term lease agreement with the McCauslands granting the McCauslands the right to use the Sheep Tract for agricultural operations. On the same date, the Foundation entered into a three-year Maintenance and Service Agreement under which the McCauslands agreed to provide Angus Tract management and stewardship services for the Foundation for a fee which the Foundation believed would be less than if purchased from third parties. After the initial three year term, the Maintenance and Service Agreement was subsequently renewed long term.

## Endowment Fund

In October 2008, the Foundation began to plan for a fundraising campaign to provide an endowment to fund the future stewardship of the Angus and Sheep Tracts. With a lead gift from the Karabots Foundation in July 2009, and the proceeds of the sale of the Sheep Tract farmhouse at 543 Flourtown Road to the McCauslands in July 2010, the endowment campaign was successfully initiated. The Endowment totaled in excess of \$3 million as of December 31, 2016, with commitments and anticipated future gifts of over an additional \$1.5 million.





DIXON MEADOW PRESERVE

# REGIONAL OPEN SPACE SYSTEM

The Dixon Meadow Preserve is a 126-acre natural area located in the White Marsh area of Baltimore County, Maryland. It is a prime example of a natural area that has been preserved and managed for the benefit of the community.

126  
ACRES



White Marsh Foundation has purchased and restored this 126-acre natural area. The preserve is a prime example of a natural area that has been preserved and managed for the benefit of the community. It is a prime example of a natural area that has been preserved and managed for the benefit of the community.

WHITEMARSH  
FOUNDATION

DCM



# Dixon Meadow Preserve

*The Preserve has become a popular recreational area, particularly for birders who report that it provides important habitat for a large number of local and migratory species.*

As required under the terms of the previously mentioned Angus “Declaration”, 14 acres were permanently set aside for a nature preserve including a stormwater retention facility, to be funded with a \$400,000 grant from Merck pursuant to the Consent Decree. LandConcepts was engaged in the spring of 2009 to prepare conceptual plans for the Preserve and stormwater facility. In June 2010, LandConcepts presented plans for the proposed 14-acre meadow preserve on the lower portion of the Angus Tract, including a small pond, boardwalk and trails. The project was to be coordinated with the Hill at Whitemarsh which planned to alter the north retention basin to increase capacity and reduce the rate of outflow. The Preserve was to be landscaped with native grasses, plants and tree species. The design required close coordination with the Farm to mesh the farming operations with public use of the Preserve.

Construction started in the fall of 2010 and was completed in the spring and summer of 2011. The Preserve included an 800’ boardwalk across the wetland and pond, constructed by Whitemarsh Township as part of the Angus trail. Total cost of the Preserve, excluding the boardwalk, and including landscaping was nearly \$800,000, of which \$400,000 was funded by Merck and the balance by private fundraising.

In recognition of the important role which the Widener and Dixon families have played in maintaining the Farm for nearly the preceding 100 years, the facility was named the “Dixon Meadow Preserve” at a formal dedication ceremony attended by County, School District, and Township officials on October 29, 2014, after completion of the parking lot and trail connection described on the following pages.



# Dixon Meadow House

*Located on the Angus Tract at 548 Flourtown Road is a three story farmhouse built between 1857 and 1860. With elegant millwork and high ceilings, the farmhouse was constructed as the residence of the then owner of over 100 acres of the Farm.*

Importantly, it has contributed to the Farm's image as a 19th century working farm and rural landscape. Used as a residence for farm workers by the Wideners and Dixons, the building had remained vacant since before the Foundation's purchase of the Angus Tract in 2008.



Although reserved for the exclusive use of the Colonial School District, it subsequently appeared that the District had no plan to use the property both for programmatic and financial reasons. However, recognizing that it could serve as a parking area to provide access for possible future use of the farmhouse, as well as to the Dixon Meadow Preserve, in August 2013 the District granted the Foundation

the right to construct a small parking lot on the north side of the building and a connecting trail to the Preserve. The parking facility was completed by the spring of 2014 which enabled convenient parking and public access to the Preserve.

After extensive discussions with the Foundation, the District agreed to release its interest in both the two acre farmhouse parcel and the adjoining one acre student garden area. On April 14, 2014, the District and Foundation entered into agreement under which the District's interest in the property was terminated and the Foundation agreed to reimburse \$18,000 of costs incurred by the District in maintaining the property, as well as making annual payments of \$15,000 to the District beginning August 1, 2014 and ending August 1, 2023. As a result of this transaction, the Foundation assumed both full control of the farmhouse and student garden area as well as the responsibility for its maintenance.

Thanks to the generosity of Edith Dixon who donated the lead gift, the Foundation raised funds to repair and restore the building. In October 2015, Harth Builders was engaged to undertake the reconstruction of the building which included a new roof; new HVAC, plumbing and electrical systems; ADA compliant access and bathroom; new patio; exterior and interior painting and landscaping. The Foundation applied for and obtained a zoning variance which permits use of the building as an office for the Foundation on the second floor, a caretaker apartment on the third floor, with the first floor being available for use by non-profit groups for educational and related purposes.

The work was completed in March 2016 and the building was formally dedicated and named "Dixon Meadow House" in honor of Mrs. Dixon in April 2016.



# Toward the Future

With nearly 15 years of continuing support by numerous governmental and private organizations, as well as hundreds of individuals, the Whitemarsh Foundation can confidently state that its initial mission has been substantially accomplished: Erdenheim Farm has been protected from development and will remain open space in perpetuity; the remarkable and iconic views of the Farm have been maintained and protected; and agricultural operations are continuing. Special recognition and thanks are due the Hill at Whitemarsh, the Community Groups, Natural Lands Trust, Edith Robb Dixon and the Dixon Estate, the McCausland family, Whitemarsh Township, Montgomery County, the Colonial School District and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Resources.

With the Dixon Meadow Preserve widely enjoyed and available for public use, and the Dixon Meadow House engaged in community environmental education, the Foundation will continue to advocate for the preservation of open space and provide area residents with educational and recreational opportunities in the years ahead.



[whitemarshfoundation.org](http://whitemarshfoundation.org)

March 2017



## NOTES

1. *The Founders included: Mr. and Mrs. Willard Boothby, Thomas and Elizabeth Dolan, Edward C. Driscoll, Thomas and Sally Fernley, John J. Fleming, Phyllis B. Fleming, Armin and Sue Frank, Quita Woodward Horan, Pemberton Hutchinson, Thomas and Mary Hyndman, Dr. G. Clayton Kyle, William and Sue Learned, Dr. Charles and Caroline Lee, William and Maud Littleton, Marjorie Orr, Stanley and Joan Root, Lewis and Elizabeth Somers, James M. Stewart, Newbold and Nancy Strong, Samuel and Judith Stroud, Frank Tarbox, Joan G. Thayer, Patricia S. Walsh, John Westrum, Westrum CCRP, L. P., and Elizabeth H. Webb*
2. *Erdenheim Farm then consisted of five tracts known as the Wissabickon Tract containing 114 acres situated between Stenton Avenue and Thomas Road, with 3500 feet of frontage on the Wissabickon Creek; the Angus Tract, 151 acres located along Thomas and Flourtown Roads; the Sheep Tract, 109 acres including the main farm buildings, bounded by Stenton Avenue, Flourtown Road, the KYW property and the quarry; the Equestrian Tract, 100 acres on the east side of Stenton Avenue; and the Residence Tract, 23 acres containing the main residence, tennis court, greenhouses and apartments. All tracts were located in Whitemarsh Township, except the Equestrian Tract which was about half in Whitemarsh and half in Springfield Townships*
3. *Under the will of George Widener, Jr., the Equestrian Tract was given to Fitz Eugene Dixon, Jr. The Natural Lands Trust was bequeathed the 137 acre Wissabickon Tract subject to a life estate in favor of Mr. Dixon. The Natural Lands Trust was authorized to sell such portions of the Tract as it determined were not essential to its conservation mission. NLT subsequently sold its remainder interest in 23 acres to Mr. Dixon containing the estate residence, tennis court, greenhouses and apartments, with the result that Mr. Dixon owned the fee interest in the Residence Tract. The Widener will provided that his objectives concerning the provisions relating to the Wissabickon Tract were “to provide for the preservation of the Wissabickon Creek and surrounding land in a natural state for future recreation, enjoyment and education of the public” in addition to providing for its use by Mr. Dixon during his lifetime. The will further granted Mr. Dixon options to purchase both the Angus Tract and Sheep Tract at the valuation determined by the IRS for estate tax purposes. In September 1972 Mr. Dixon exercised these options and purchased both Tracts.*
4. *The Foundation was awarded provisional status as a “public charity” as opposed to being classified as a “private foundation”. The “public charity” status was confirmed in 2006. This status was of critical importance because it freed the Foundation from numerous restrictions which apply to private foundations.*
5. *The initial members were Thomas Dolan, Hugh G. Moulton and James M. Stewart, appointees of the Hill at Whitemarsh; James McGann and Kimberly G. Sheppard, appointees of the Whitemarsh Township Residents Association; Joseph Meo, appointee of the Whitemarsh Valley Farms Community Association; Anthony Maginnis, appointee of the Whitemarsh Valley Country Club; and Paul Meyer, Executive Director of the Morris Arboretum. Robert Wurtz was subsequently appointed in 2002 as the second representative of the Whitemarsh Valley Farms Community Association. In January 2003 Eve Wildrick became an appointee of the Whitemarsh Township Residents Association in the place of Mr. McGann. In February 2003 Lewis Somers replaced Mr. Dolan as one of the three Hill representatives, and Mr. McGann replaced Mr. Wurtz as one of the Farms group representatives. On May 23, 2005 Mr. McGann resigned and was replaced as the Farms group representative by Mr. Wurtz. In November 2006 Kim Sheppard resigned when she became Executive Director and was succeeded by Harriet Campbell, as a nominee of the WTRA. In October 2012 Tina Krause was appointed as a Hill representative, replacing Lew Somers who passed away in August 2011. Eve Wildrick resigned in 2014 having moved to New York. Her position as an appointee of WTRA has not been filled to date. In April 2014 John Bartlett joined the Board as a Hill representative, replacing Jim Stewart who died in 2013.*
6. *Hugh G. Moulton was elected as Chairman and President; Kimberly G. Sheppard, Vice President; Anthony Maginnis, Secretary and Treasurer. Mr. Moulton and Mr. Maginnis held those positions until January 2015 when Mr. Maginnis was elected Chairman and Mr. Moulton Secretary and Treasurer. Ms. Sheppard resigned as a member of the Board in 2006 when she became Executive Director and was elected President in January 2015.*
7. *The “public” members included: Deidra Lyngard, Chairman, Timothy Ferris, Randy Gray, Steven Kaufman and Hugh Moulton*
8. *The Trustees were Mr. Dixon’s widow, Edith Robb Dixon, daughter Ellin Dixon Miller, and Mark DePillis, a partner at Ballard Spahr, long term attorneys for the Widener and Dixon families*
9. *The Angus Declaration has subsequently been amended to realign trail easements, reflect the release by the Colonial School District of its rights of use of the farmhouse and student garden area, and permit the use by the Foundation of the farmhouse for an office and for educational purposes*
  - *Photos courtesy Paul Meyer, Kim Sheppard, Jamie Stewart, and Linda Fry Goschke*



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