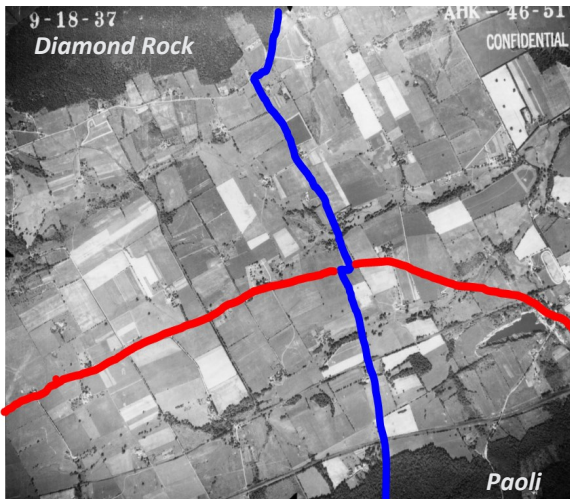


The First Land Preservation Organization in Chester County— and one of the oldest in the Nation!

The Great Valley . . . 1939 . . .



1937: North Valley Road, Swedesford Road - All Farmland

. . . The Pennsylvania Turnpike would not be built until 1950 . . . the 202 expressway did not exist . . . the Township was primarily a farming community. . . there were no corporate centers, no office buildings . . . a pristine area. There appeared to be no need for government environmental councils, no storm water runoff concerns. So, why would it be necessary to “preserve land?” There seemed to be plenty of land – unspoiled by roads, houses or office buildings.

Well, one individual was concerned enough about land use in the area and wanted to have her property preserved as forest or woodland. Thus began the Open Land Conservancy of Chester County. The following extract from the Tredyffrin Easttown Historical Society Quarterly of July 1940 describes the donation of the Conservancy’s first Preserve, since increased to 75 acres and now named Airdrie Forest, and also describes the purpose and values that continue nearly 80 years later:

“Miss Lydia S. Moncure Robinson of Airdrie, Paoli, has recently conveyed to the Chester County Horticultural Society of which Howard S. Okie, Esq. is president, some 63 acres of woodland on the South Valley Hills overlooking the Great Valley.

This gift fulfils one of the Society's main objects, that of the "acquisition of land suitable for wild flower and forest preserve", the development of which will require energy and enthusiasm. We see in the future sparkling fern-bordered pools in the three branches of the Valley Creek, the steep sides of the wooded ravines glowing with shade-loving native flowers, and easy paths throughout the mile-long park. . . Surely our loyal citizens, especially those of Tredyffrin and Easttown, will give their hearty support to this worthy project.”



1941: Visitors at Airdrie Preserve Courtesy TEHS

“Beautiful open spaces are one of the many reasons that Tredyffrin is an incredibly sought-after place to live. They speak both to our long-standing traditions and to our bright future. It is a joy to celebrate 80 years with Open Land Conservancy.”

State Representative Melissa Shusterman PA-157

Did You Know??

The Open Land Conservancy was originally named the Chester County Horticultural Society?

There was an organization of the same name in 1845 whose purpose was to promote the science of agriculture in the County.

What Makes A Successful Land Trust?

Not everything is just handed to us—Open Land Conservancy has thrived because its leaders were always on the lookout for opportunities: gifts from landowners, grants from organizations, grants from state and local governments, land from developers/companies which was not part of their future plans. And, contacting the right people at the right time, negotiating with them, and most importantly, getting them to understand the importance of maintaining the natural world around us. Essentially, it takes committed people with a common goal—those willing to work keep the beauty we have in the Valley, and expand it when possible.

“Open Land Conservancy has been quietly preserving land and working to improve watershed health for decades. I've only become aware of the work of OLC since joining the EAC, but everywhere I turn someone from OLC is collaborating with EAC efforts and providing us with the historical perspective we lack. I've been able to depend on OLC members for everything from help developing a Stormwater Field Trip to participation in a bird walk to spearheading tree planting. OLC folks form the backbone of environmental efforts in Tredyffrin Township.”

Mary Westervelt— Chair, Environmental Advisory Council, Tredyffrin Township

It is an amazing accomplishment that these preserves have been created in the fastest growing County in Pennsylvania, close to the largest employer in Chester County (Vanguard), adjacent to 2 of the busiest highways in Pennsylvania, and is a short distance from the largest mall in the Eastern US.

Conservancy guards what's left of Tredyffrin's fertile crescent

Following roads and rail, developers paved the township. But for decades, preservationists set some land aside.

By Christopher Merrill

TREDYFFRIN — Route 202 and SEPTA's passenger rail silters across Tredyffrin Township like the Tigris and Euphrates of suburban development.

Over the last quarter century, thousands of businesses and residences have been brought to their banks and beyond, transforming much of the farmland into a medley of business parks, strip malls and housing developments.

Scattered throughout the brick and mortar, however, are about 450 acres of wildlife preserves, forests and wild flowers, valleys, meadows, ponds and streams. Much of that land is open to the public, and all of it has been indefinitely spared development by the Open Land Conservancy.

"We're very attached to the streams, the wildflowers and trees — the natural landscape," said Mitsie Toland, who has guided the conservancy for 25 years. "It's a retreat from the paving over of the valley, and restores the soul."

Incorporated in 1939, the conservancy was formed to accept as gifts the pieces of land that now make up the 74.3-acre Airdrie Forest Preserve. In 1975, about the time Toland arrived, the group began aggressively fighting to protect and acquire open space.

The group now has a 15-member board of directors, 500 members, 10 conservation easements (174 acres), and six nature preserves (276 acres) open to the public for hiking, cross-country skiing, picnics and fishing.

"She was the driving force of it then, and she still is," said Henry Wessells, a longtime board member who has lived in Tredyffrin for 38 years.

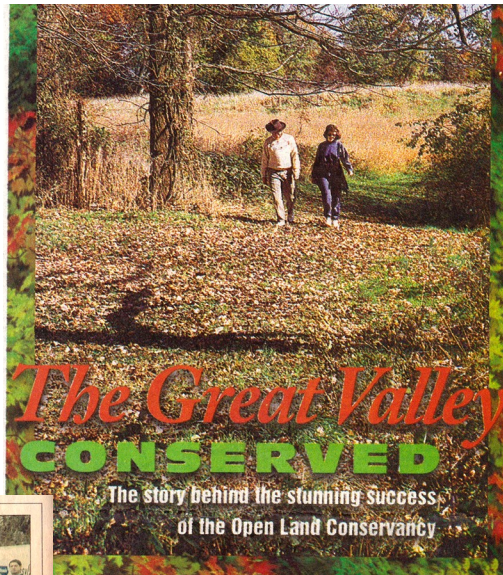
Wessells left the area briefly in the late 1970s.

"When we came back in 1980," he said, "it was heavily developed, and [Route] 202 was the leading factor, brought a lot of people and a lot of business."

"It was becoming apparent to everyone that something had to be done," he said. He joined the conservancy soon after returning.

"We recognize that there is a right to do business," Wessells said, "but it has to be responsible."

The group maintains a *quid pro quo* philosophy that each new development should set aside land for open space. And open space means natural habitat, not playgrounds and ball fields; the goal is more about preserving the character of



Gov. Ridge helps keep Tredyffrin green

By Betsy Gilliland

One of the last undeveloped properties in Chester County has been spared from development.

This comes thanks to "Growing Greener," a \$645.9 million investment in the state's environment, which was signed into law by Gov. Tom Ridge Dec. 15 on the grounds of the historic St. Peter's Church in the Great Valley in Malvern.

Ridge signed the bill, passed overwhelmingly by the General Assembly this month, before more than 100 people gathered

Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Ridge signs "Growing Greener" environmental legislation at historic St. Peter's Church in the Great Valley in Malvern last week.

Growing Greener will do," said King of Prussia Mall.

A \$100,000 land trust grant to Open Land Conservancy of Chester County from the Depart-

Slowly, quietly, Tredyffrin's Mitsie Toland preserves township's space

The Open Lands Conservancy prez spots the sites and gets the grants.

By Owen Daniels

Toland ambled briskly onto a dry meadow and through the steam hovering over the region that

Mitsie Toland was happy to

new parcel would be a continuation of the Valley Creek Preserve immediately to the west, enveloping and protecting the stream.

Did You Know?

The Open Land Conservancy is the second largest landowner in Tredyffrin? The Township is the largest landowner.

How we grew . . . 1939 to the Present . . .

1940 **Airdrie Preserve 75 acres**
Gift from Miss Lydia Robinson & addition of the Great Bear Tract

1975 **Valley Creek Preserve 47 acres**
Gift from Mr. and Mrs. Robert Maes, with subsequent additions from Pohlig Construction, and William Barrett.

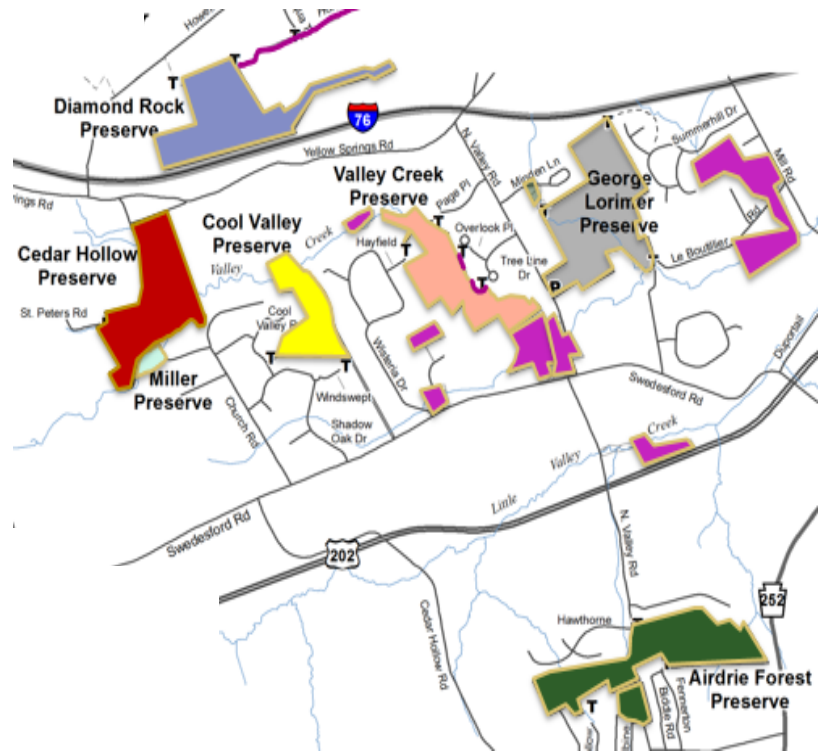
1979 **Cool Valley Preserve 33 acres**
Gift from Mrs. Henry J. Kaltenthler and the First Forge Corporation

1980 **George Lorimer Preserve 88 acres**
Various donations from the Lorimer family

1994 **Diamond Rock Preserve 67 acres**
Gift from Natural Lands Trust and subsequent additions using grants from Chester County and the State

1998 **Miller Preserve 3 acres**
Gift from Mr. & Mrs. Morris Miller

1999 **Cedar Hollow Preserve 67 acres**
Bought with grants from Chester County, and PA Growing Greener - purchased from Trammel Crow and SMS



We are also responsible for protecting 93 acres of easements, which various landowners have deeded us over the years!

On behalf of Tredyffrin Township and its residents, I am sending 80th birthday wishes to Open Land Conservancy. We thank the Conservancy for its seven Preserves in our Township, support its efforts to protect our natural resources for the enjoyment of all, and wish it continuing success in preserving our natural environment for future generations.

Murph Wysocki, Chair, Tredyffrin Township Bd. Of Supervisors

The Challenge Continues!

As we move into the 21st Century, the land available for preservation has diminished – but is not completely gone – so the Conservancy’s focus on sustaining its precious resources has increased. Some of the projects recently completed or in progress:

- Documenting our processes and systems to apply for Accreditation by the Land Trust Alliance in 2021
- In Airdrie, completed the demolition of the old scout cabin and modification of the Township stormwater device to reduce downhill erosion; now planning for grant-funded restoration and education opportunities
- Relocated sections of trails in Lorimer and Cedar Hollow to improve safety – thanks respectively to an Eagle Scout team and to stalwart volunteers
- Eliminating the invasive Ailanthus (Tree of Heaven) tree that is the primary host for the Spotted Lanternfly

Did You Know??

The Open Land Conservancy is totally a volunteer organization dependent on membership contributions? We ask everyone who supports our mission or who appreciates and enjoys our Preserves to consider an added contribution in honor of our Anniversary - perhaps \$80 to recognize 80 years!

Our 80th Anniversary!

Board of Directors

Michael F. Wilson, President
Raymond F. Clarke, Vice President
John J. Etherington, Secretary
David Rogers, Treasurer
Michael S. Burg, Solicitor
Art Blumenthal
Scott Bush
Richard B. Lander
Timothy S. Magee
Dr. Robert Schuster
Margot Taylor, RLA

Executive Secretary

Sharon L. Danbach

Emeritus Board Members

Katharine A. E. Campbell
Robert W. Haver
Penelope P. Wilson

*Are you interested in preserving the open space
of Chester County for future generations?*

*Ask us about becoming an OLC
Board member or volunteer!*

Contact Us!

The best way to contact us is via our website at:
openlandconservancy.org

What Can You Do On-line?

- Become an OLC Member
- Make a Donation
- Become a Volunteer
- Obtain Information on OLC Preserves Including
Preserve Trail Maps
- Find Out About Upcoming Events
- Report a Safety or Maintenance Issue
- View the Landmarks Newsletter (and much more!)

Follow Us!

- On Twitter @openlandconserv
- On Facebook at [www.facebook.com/
openlandconservancy](http://www.facebook.com/openlandconservancy)

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Paoli, PA 19301

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610-647-5380