



# TREDYFFRIN TOWNSHIP

CHESTER COUNTY

# SUMMER 2022 NEWSLETTER

*Open Land Conservancy's George Lorimer Nature Preserve on North Valley Road*



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# OPEN LAND CONSERVANCY BY RAY CLARK, VICE-PRESIDENT

## Awarded Accredited Status

One of Tredyffrin's best kept secrets just achieved a couple of major milestones, and it's time to make the community more aware of the jewel in our midst.

### What is Open Land Conservancy ("OLC", or "The Conservancy")?

OLC is a land trust that, since its founding in 1939, has been fulfilling a mission to preserve and sustain open space for public enjoyment and wildlife habitat. It is managed by a Board of Directors, and sustained by the efforts and contributions from its members - all volunteers.



OLC's George Lorimer Nature Preserve

### What is a land trust?

A land trust is a charitable organization that owns land or holds conservation easements to achieve one or more conservation purposes. Those conservation purposes may include protecting natural habitat, water quality or scenic views, or ensuring that the land is always available for farming, forestry or outdoor recreational use. Land trusts make sure that the land they care for is properly conserved and brings benefits to the community in perpetuity. Most land trusts are independent, private charitable organizations that are tax-exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the tax code. A Board of Directors, drawn from the communities the land trust serves, is responsible for the actions of the land trust. All of this is true for OLC. Notably, Tredyffrin Township has no responsibilities for OLC, although it is an important and valued partner.

### How do land ownership and conservation easements work?

A land trust may own land directly ("fee ownership") and/or it may hold conservation easements, which are binding agreements to limit the use of land in order to accomplish conservation benefits. In those cases, the property owner retains ownership of, and responsibility for, the land and is free to use it within the agreed constraints. Donations of land or easements may be considered charitable deductions by the IRS. OLC has both kinds

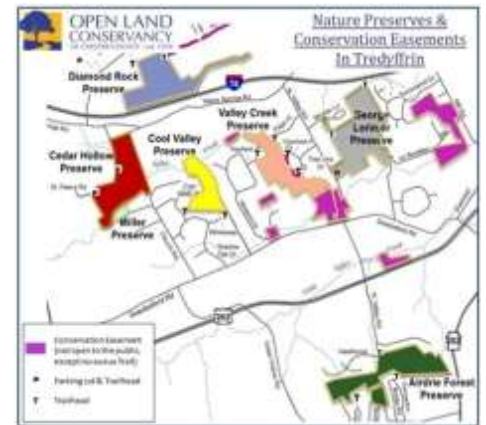
of interests, although the majority of the open space it conserves is made up of its Natures Preserves, owned in fee.

### How did Open Land Conservancy get started?

Back in 1939, there was no Pennsylvania Turnpike or US202 expressway, and Tredyffrin was primarily a farming community. But Lydia Moncure Robinson of Paoli had the foresight to see the need for conservation of open space, and she donated 65 acres on the South Valley Hills to the then-named Chester County Horticultural Society.

### Where is Open Land Conservancy today?

The last 80 years have seen OLC retain its focus on the Tredyffrin community in the Valley Creek watershed. Its volunteers worked determinedly to assure that owners and developers saved as much land as possible for open space, and now OLC's properties span the western part of the Township, shown on the neighboring map. OLC President Mac Wilson says, "Today's residents owe a great debt to generous families that followed Ms. Robinson, such as the Lorimers, Maes, Millers, Tolands, and others, and to the County and Commonwealth for generous grant support for land purchases. OLC was the very first recipient of a Growing Greener grant for its acquisition of the Cedar Hollow Preserve."



From the TE Historical Society Quarterly of 1940: "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."



The Great Valley in 1937 Farmland and Wooded Hillides

This origin of what is now the 75 acre Airdrie Forest Preserve makes OLC one of the oldest - and arguably the oldest - land trust in Pennsylvania.

### How does the Conservancy manage its land?

OLC depends on its volunteer Board of Directors, a wonderful and dedicated group of volunteers, and many community group projects. Each Preserve has one or two managers, and professional service companies and volunteers cut the trails and remove hazard and fallen trees.

Regular volunteer programs help to control, and in some cases eliminate, invasive species, and groups such as the Eagle Scouts, pictured here, have been instrumental in projects that enhance the visitor experience in all Preserves. Board members provide essential professional, legal, accounting, land stewardship, etc., expertise, and the Conservancy would be delighted to welcome more to join.

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Scouts from the Devon 50 troop led by Eagle Scout Jack Fields on the bridge they built across Cedar Hollow Run in 2010



# OPEN LAND CONSERVANCY CONTINUED

## Those Conservancy Milestones - and where Next!

**#1 - Accreditation!** OLC has long been a part of the National Land Trust Alliance and Pennsylvania's equivalent (WeConservePA). Those groups, plus friends at the much larger Natural Lands Trust and Brandywine Conservancy, provide invaluable guidance on professional standards and practices. Now, OLC's adherence to those standards and practices has just been confirmed by the award of Accredited status by the LTA.



Accredited land trusts protect more than 79% of all land and easements held by land trusts in America. The accreditation seal offers the assurance that OLC can keep the promise of perpetuity and that it is worthy of the public trust. The application was a two-year process that required a thorough analysis and documentation of OLC's policies and procedures. Board member

Tim Lander, who spearheaded the process, said, *"The Accreditation application process required significant effort by the entire Board of Directors, but the result is well worth it. We now stand on equal footing with the largest land trusts in the country in the way we maintain our preserved properties and in how we steward our financial resources."*

**#2 - A New Preserve!** Valley Creek is the lifeblood of the Conservancy, so the donation of 10.6 acres of high-quality undeveloped land at the very headwaters to the creek in Charlestown and East Whiteland Townships is an important development that allows OLC to partner with them to further protect the watershed. The Conservancy worked on the project with donor Rob Kendig for a decade and is very grateful for his generosity and patience. Readers can expect more information in coming months as OLC develops an access and management plan.

**#3 - A New Look!** The Conservancy is marking its 80 years and its recent milestones with an initiative to better

connect with its current constituents, increase awareness and broaden its appeal, through refreshed branding and expanded communications efforts across the community. OLC Director Margot Taylor, who led this team, said, "The updated logo symbolizes the open space that OLC sustains, centered on the tree planted in Lorimer preserve in memory of long time force of nature Mitsie Toland, who was so influential in growing the Conservancy's preserved lands". The initiative will present clear messaging to help the community identify and enjoy the Preserves and learn how to give back. Readers should expect to see the new look as it rolls out over coming weeks. In particular, check the website at [www.openlandconservancy.org](http://www.openlandconservancy.org).



And in the meantime, OLC Vice-President Ray Clarke encourages all residents to "...visit one of the Preserves to explore, enjoy, connect, and then - if you can - Give Back!"

## VALLEY FORGE PARK ALLIANCE

### Maruice Stephens House Campaign



If you've ever walked the trails at Valley Forge National Historical Park, you've no doubt noticed a striking historical building sitting empty and quiet on the Grand Parade. That's the Maurice Stephens House, built in 1816 on the site where Brigadier General Jedediah Huntington was encamped with his troops during the winter encampment of 1777-1778. Used over the years as a home, a farm, ranger dormitories, park offices, and even a nature center, the house has been vacant since the mid-1990s. The Valley Forge Park Alliance (VFPA) is about to change all

that, and is preparing to turn the house into a much-needed gathering spot and café, as well as the new headquarters of the VFPA.

Trail users and history buffs alike can rejoice! The historic building will receive sorely-needed repairs to bring it back to life and share the Valley Forge story through exhibits and programs. Visitors who find themselves thirsty on the trails will now have a place to refresh themselves along the way. And it won't be just any old café: it will be operated by Aneu Kitchen. "It's not every

day you get an opportunity like this," said Meridith Coyle, owner, founder, and president of Aneu Kitchen. "I could have picked any location to open another café, but it's very special to be able to operate in a building like this and become a part of history." With locations in Paoli, Ocean City and Margate, Aneu will bring healthy fare, juices, smoothies, ice cream and more to Valley Forge.

Construction is expected to begin this fall. An addition, scheduled to be built next spring, will include accessible restrooms, accessibility ramps, and deck space for café seating. The VFPA is in the midst of a capital campaign to raise \$980,000 for the project, which is a partnership with Valley Forge National Historical Park.

"VFPA's rehabilitation and operation of the Maurice Stephens House would serve as a shining example of the capacity of public-private partnerships to restore and breathe new life into historic structures," said Rose Fennell, superintendent of Valley Forge National Historical Park. "It would also allow our partner to support the significance statements in our Foundation Document: to tell the story of the 1777-78 winter encampment of the Continental Army, continue the tradition of citizen stewardship, and support preservation of open space in a dense urban environment."

Learn more about the plans and contribute to the cause at [vfparkalliance.org/mshcampaign](http://vfparkalliance.org/mshcampaign).

Donors will be recognized on a Donor Wall inside the building!

