



Centuries of Family Farming

The Coleman Family's Gift of Good Land

Mondon Smith's stewardship ethic and connection to the land held by his family for nearly 200 years can be traced to his birth in the first house built on the now-preserved, 110-acre Coleman Farm in Altoona.

He has lived on this land his whole life, as did his mother, Thelma Coleman Smith, who shared her passion for the land with her son — also

undoubtedly an influence on Smith's commitment to stewardship. Thelma, who raised six children on the farm, tended the vineyard at the top of the hill, overlooking the fields that stretch from the woodland at Davis Road to Grandview Road.

Steward of the Land

"I never thought of myself as the owner of the property, but as its steward," says Smith.

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Easement donor Mondon Smith (& Rocky) on his family's Century Farm, the Coleman Farm, in Altoona.

CCFT Reviews 2022, Elects New Trustees



Franklin Egan



David Litke

CCFT Welcomes New Trustees

Soil scientist and climate strategist Franklin Egan and conservation easement donor David Litke were elected at the November 17 CCFT annual meeting to a three-year and one-year term, respectively.

Egan, a Boalsburg resident, worked with the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture

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David Litke's preserved land in Bellefonte.

Because of you, our members and all of your support for farmland preservation, the Centre County Farmland Trust in 2022 preserved more land and made a lot of progress behind-the-scenes. See page 4 for President Dan Guss' letter, reviewing 2022 and looking ahead to 2023, that he shared at the Nov. 17 annual meeting.



Preserving Coleman Farm's Legacy *(cont.)*

Smith worked as a locomotive engineer, the same job held by his father and grandfather, operating freight trains. For a stretch of several years, he worked the route between Pittsburgh and Harrisburg. He retired in 2005 after 37 years combined at Penn Central, Conrail, and Norfolk Southern Railroads. He does not have children.

Facing Uncertain Future

By 2018, when Smith donated a conservation easement to the Centre County Farmland Trust, both his parents had died after living into their 90s. Through agreements with them, Mondon had become the farm's sole owner. There is no current interest in farming among the rest of the family.

He knew the land faced an uncertain future, wanted to keep it in agriculture and protected from development, so approached the Trust.

The easement is a legal instrument that stays with the land to keep it open and undeveloped in perpetuity. Since this reduces the commercial sales value of the land, an easement represents a landowner's generous donation to the public, through the Trust.

Nearly Two Centuries of Farming

The Coleman family has owned the land since at least 1835, according to the "Century Farms" designation, signed by Pennsylvania Governor Dick Thornburgh, who served from 1979 to 1987. Brothers Dave and Jim Coleman are believed to have purchased

it in 1835. Such continuous ownership demonstrates "a durability and love of the land that is the heritage of Pennsylvania" notes the certificate.

Prime Location

Smith's maternal grandparents, Chester and Agnes Coleman, purchased the land from Dave and Jim, Chester's cousins in 1919 for \$9,000. They grew fruits and vegetables, poultry, eggs, meat and dairy products and had good access to the Altoona Farmers Market building on Green Ave., at Eighth Street.

When Smith's parents ran the farm, his mother's grapevines were the only remaining fruit crop. The farm's mainstays were boarding horses and making hay. Earl, Mondon's father, worked on the railroad. In time, the vineyard succumbed to black rot and predators.

Coleman Farm's Legacy

Today, remnants of the old vineyard are visible on the hill. The land is managed for grazing and leased to beef cattle farmers. It provides a beautiful view (above) from the neighboring Grandview Cemetery, which was once part of Coleman Farm, as were four adjacent properties totalling 21 acres. A small herd of friendly, entertaining goats greets visitors.

"I was the one that more or less never left home," says Smith, who has continued the Coleman Family's legacy. He hopes to find a new owner to keep the land in agriculture and hand it down — continuing the legacy of stewardship of this Gift of Good Land.



Linda Friend

Catherine Smith



Opposite page: The Coleman Farm from Grandview Cemetery.

This page, top to bottom: Mondon Smith's parents, Earle and Thelma Coleman Smith; Coleman Farm's Century Farm certificate from Pennsylvania; Signs mark the lane; Thomas, one of the farm's friendly goats.

Board of Trustees Elections *(cont. from p 1)*

before co-founding RegenAll, a non-profit to help local businesses and governments work through climate action planning.

Farmland preservation is an enormous lever to aid local climate planning, Egan says.

"Well-managed farmland can sequester carbon dioxide in healthy soils and can also help landscapes be more resilient in the face of the extreme temperatures and precipitation that climate change will bring to our region," says Egan.

"By constraining suburban sprawl, preserved farmland can push communities to make better choices about housing and transportation."

David Litke

David Litke, a helicopter pilot and owner of Polarblast sand-blasting company, preserved 55 acres of farmland in Bellefonte in 2022. Litke served in the U.S. Air Force in Vietnam as an air evacuation medic. He is concerned about farmers having access to good land suitable for farming and wants to prevent development on his land.

Linda Friend and Catherine Smith

Trustees Linda Friend and Catherine Smith were re-elected to three-year terms. Both reside in Penns Valley and are committed to conservation best practices. Friend has a farm and also volunteers for Centre County PAWS and AAUW State College.

Smith, a retired Professor Emerita of English in Professional Communication, University of North Carolina-East Carolina, lives on 68 acres that has been farmed for more than two centuries. She and John Smith manage their farm, ChicoryLane (chicorylane.com), for ecology, diversity, habitat protection, waterway protection, and aesthetic appreciation as guided by goals set in a conservation easement held by ClearWater Conservancy.

Learn more: centrecountyfarmlandtrust.org/who-we-are



President's 2022 Letter

Letter from Dan Guss, President of the Board of Trustees



Thank you to all board members, supporting members and supporting staff for all of your hard work, enthusiasm and support for land preservation.

Looking back at the year, a lot of good things have happened. The Centre County Farmland Trust preserved 55 acres in Bellefonte, thanks to easement donor David Litke.

The Litke easement will be an oasis of green, open farm and forest land that will benefit future generations. Thank you to ClearWater Conservancy for the technical assistance that they made available from Ryan Hamilton, to establish the Litke easement.

Behind the Scenes

This year, together we have made significant progress in our financial position.

It is just so special to have received a very generous contribution of about \$129,000 from the estate of Lynn Miller, one of our founders. A \$180,000 three-year grant from the Hamer Foundation to the Trust should result in our being able to establish a stable,

properly staffed organization going into the future.

We also were able to establish a \$50,000 operating endowment fund through a special matching program with Centre Foundation.

In addition, we had significant help from an annual, ongoing Hamer Foundation Grant, Happy Valley Adventure Bureau grants for our Farm Routes outreach, the yearly Centre Gives program, and steady, ongoing giving from our individual loyal supporters.

Individual contributions **DO** add up!

Stewarding Finances & Land

A special shout-out to the Farmland Preservation Artists for their expression of our values, and for significant contributions from sales of their artwork.

To manage our fortunate funding situation, we have now established a financial policy and appointed a financial advisor.

Of course, this is all about stewardship of the land. We are improving our ability to monitor and service the 1,483 acres we protect, thanks to technical help from ClearWater Conservancy.

In 2023, we expect to be busy with our restructuring and outreach programs, and possibly with a few more land preservations that we have in the works.

Thank you all for what you do! We are witnessing what great things we can accomplish when we work together for protection of the land!



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Members-elect

Franklin Egan

David Litke

Keep in Touch!

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