



Eleanor Morris

March 6, 1919 - September 11, 2011

Eleanor May Morris, a pioneer in using conservation easements to save open space, died peacefully at her home in Pughtown on Sunday, September 11, 2011. She was 92 and was the widow of former state Representative Samuel W. Morris. A resident of South Coventry Township for 65 years, Mrs. Morris was very active in politics, land conservation, historic preservation, and many facets of community life. Her deepest commitment was to conserving open space. In 1967, she and her husband founded the French and Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust. The mission of the Trust was to preserve open space in the watersheds of the two creeks, as well as historic buildings and communities. It was among the first organizations in the nation to promote the preservation of open space through the use of conservation easements, a novel approach at that time. Under her leadership, the Trust convened national conferences on open space preservation to share innovative techniques with others. Mrs. Morris was the driving force behind the Trust from its founding until 2002 and served as President for 30 years. During her tenure, the Trust permanently preserved over 7,000 acres through donated and purchased conservation easements as well as public/private partnerships. In addition, it placed over 60 sites and districts on the National Register of Historic Places. "Eleanor Morris was passionate about land preservation and relentlessly took on developers to save beautiful pieces of land in perpetuity," said Brenda Barrett, former Director of the Bureau of Recreation and Conservation of Pennsylvania's Department of Conservation and Natural

Resources. "She battled with townships over prospective developments long before saving land was popular, but she also forged alliances with governmental entities in pursuit of preserving land for future generations." Mrs. Morris graduated from The Shipley School, attended Radcliffe College, and earned two degrees in American history from Bryn Mawr College, a B.A. in 1941 and a M.A. in 1970. Her great interest in Colonial history was instrumental in her historic preservation efforts. Eleanor and Sam Morris moved to Lundale Farm in northern Chester County in 1946. They established a dairy herd and raised sheep, pigs, beef, chickens and vegetables. While Sam practiced law in Philadelphia, Eleanor was immersed in their expanding family and community activities. She served as Den Mother to the local Cub Scout Troop, and for many years as a Boy Scout Citizenship Merit Badge counselor. She founded the Friendly Fellowship, a program for elderly neighbors. Mrs. Morris became involved in the Chester County Democratic Party shortly after moving to the South Coventry and served as a Committeeperson for 60 years. When Mr. Morris ran on the Democratic ticket for the Pennsylvania Legislature, she threw herself into managing his campaigns. He was elected in 1970 and served as the state representative for the 155th District for 18 years. Throughout that time, Mrs. Morris was his chief strategist and tireless supporter. "Farming, land preservation, and politics were completely intertwined for Eleanor and Sam Morris," said State Senator Andy Dinniman. "As just one example, Sam was the prime sponsor in the General Assembly of a bill that laid the foundation for the purchase of development rights in agricultural security areas. Over 1,500 farms have been saved in Pennsylvania as a result, and many states followed Pennsylvania's model. Eleanor was enmeshed in all Sam's legislative work. They were a great team, and because of their vision and efforts, thousands of acres will remain in open space forever." Mrs. Morris' interest in preserving land, streams, and history coalesced when the French and Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust acquired an 18th century flour mill and the land surrounding it in Chester Springs to save the property from development. She

was a founding member of The Mill at Anselma Preservation and Education Trust when the mill, now a National Historic Landmark, was spun off as a separate not-for-profit organization. Mrs. Morris served on the Valley Forge Park Commission and was deeply involved in the transfer of the park from the state to the National Park Service in 1976. In addition, she was instrumental in founding the Great Valley Nature Center in Charlestown, PA. She was long-time member of the Board of Preservation Action, a nationwide advocacy group. Mrs. Morris received many awards for her work, including the Pennsylvania Environmental Council Curtin Winsor Award in 2008; Democratic Party of Chester County Lifetime Achievement Award in 2007; You Make a Difference Community Service Award presented by the Coatesville Area N.A.A.C.P. Branch in 2004; Distinguished Alumni Award from The Shipley School in 2000; An Outstanding Woman in Historic Preservation Award from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission in 1999; Eleanor Houston Smith Conservation Award from The Schuylkill Center for Environmental Education in 1996; and Preservationist of the Year from the State Historic Preservation Board of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission in 1981. Mrs. Morris is survived by children Samuel W. Morris, Jr. (Carolyn), Barbara Morris Caspersen, Eleanor Morris Illoway (Stock), George M. J. Morris (Vicky), Cooper H. Morris (Wendy), Laura Morris Siena (Ron), Christopher L. Morris (Daryl), and Ozzie Abaye, who joined the family in 1979; 17 grandchildren; 9 great-grandchildren; and sisters Anita Kuhn and Elise Felton. Friends may call from 5 to 8 pm Friday, September 16 at the Lionville Fire Company. Remembrances of Eleanor's life will be offered at 7:00 pm. A funeral service will be held at 11:00 a.m. on September 17, 2011 at St. Peter's Church in the Great Valley, 2475 St. Peter's Road, Malvern, PA (stpetersgv.org). The family asks that in lieu of flowers, donations be made to Lundale Farm, Inc., a nonprofit organization founded to promote the Morrises' legacy in land preservation and farming, c/o The Barn Office, 1153 Ridge Road, Pottstown, PA 19465, or the French and Pickering Creeks Conservation

Trust, 511 Kimberton Road, Phoenixville, PA 19460.

Tribute Wall

RR

“ To Sam Morris and the entire Morris family, I am so sorry to hear about Eleanor's passing. I never met her personally, but I spoke on the phone with her many times. I enjoyed her directness and businesslike conversations. I have missed speaking with Eleanor in the recent past and I send you my sincerest condolences. I'm sure she will be greatly missed.

Roz Shapiro - roz.shapiro@parentebeard.com - July 19, 2013 at 08:35 AM

MM

“ My deepest sympathies. Marti Smith, VNAP Hospice

Martha Smith - martha.smith@hhminc.org - July 19, 2013 at 08:35 AM

SS

“ rip nannie

sarah morris - sarahphillies@gmail.com - July 19, 2013 at 08:35 AM

KB

“ Please accept my deepest sympathies to the family of Eleanor Morris, and to Eleanor and Stock Illoway, my friends, and former neighbors in Merlin Village!

Karen Belber - July 19, 2013 at 08:35 AM

“Thoughts of Eleanor Morris The first time I met Eleanor Morris, the first Saturday in October 1976, was a surprising exhilarating and life-directing experience. Having recently purchased our stone “farmhouse” in East Nantmeal and while in the process of preserving and restoring it, she and Mary Busenkill pushed open the temporary door to the structure to share her views about how to perform. Eleanor gave some brief pointers, “Keep the original stucco, preserve the character and do your homework.” I could not have agreed with her more. Some thought “That was cheeky,” while I said, “That was knowledge, interest and passion.” One hour after they left, at about noon, our phone rang. It was Eleanor Morris. “Don’t you know? It is Chester County Day! Go to Ann Gray Large’s house; it is open, tell her I sent you.” That was a very important moment for me. Having been a recent transplant from New England, what presented itself on that day on an historic home tour (it really was, then) was the beginning of my education in the appreciation of Chester County vernacular architecture. Although I was an English teacher in my mid twenties, she helped direct the course of my life for the next 35 years. Eleanor’s world opened outward; like ripples on a pond- architecture, farms, preservation, politics- she helped me know that all of these are inseparable elements of our life. I have more memories to share in greater depth, and I will contribute soon and often. But, for now, here are the poignant points for me: • Helping me through easements on our property (signing the document in our parlor with husband Sam Morris, Eleanor Morris and Shirley Dunwoody) • Helping Eleanor add 25 acres to Warwick County Park when I was an East Nantmeal Township Supervisor • Driving Eleanor to township meetings to help save open space • Accompanying Eleanor to meet soon-to-be President Bill Clinton and Vice President Al Gore in 1992 at the Lukens Steel Union Hall • Helping Eleanor restore her beloved Coventry House in Coventryville • And many early morning telephone calls about microscopic analyses of township and county politics. • I am grateful that Eleanor Morris chose to inform me, so that she could count on me. (More to come) Sincerely, Wesley T. Sessa, President 18th Century Restorations, Inc. WTS: dl, drh

09/16/2011

Wesley T. Sessa - 18thcent@icdc.com - July 19, 2013 at 08:35 AM

LL

“ My sincere condolences to the entire Morris family. You are in my thoughts and prayers. God speed, Mrs. Morris

Lucille Keegan - lkeegan@westbycorp.com - July 19, 2013 at 08:35 AM

ER

“ Aunt Eggie was one of the most generous people I ever knew. She was patient, loving, kind and awe inspiring. Knowing her has helped me be a better person. Fondess memories and may all your dreams come true. With love always, Eleanor "Ellie" Pew Morris Bailiff

Ellie Morris Bailiff - r.bailiff@att.net - July 19, 2013 at 08:35 AM

BK

“ Sincere sympathy in your loss

Bonnie Bloomquist Kirk - July 19, 2013 at 08:35 AM

SU

“ My deepest sympathy during this time of great loss goes out to Mrs. Eleanor Morris' family and friends and my prayers are with you all.

Sue - July 19, 2013 at 08:35 AM

TH

“ We are sorry for your great loss.

Tom and Judy Hedberg - July 19, 2013 at 08:35 AM

JL

“ Barbara; May the memories of your mother fill your heart with constant joy. . .she was an inspiration to all who met her.

John F. Lutz - July 19, 2013 at 08:35 AM

SS

“ Although I didn't know her personally we all bear witness to the wonderful legacy of her life and love.

Sally Fridy - sally.fridy@verizon.net - July 19, 2013 at 08:35 AM

DD

“ We in this area will miss Eleanor's lively and incisive intelligence, her deep commitment to history and her efforts to protect and preserve. Through her dedicated work, she has served future generations with an amazing and ongoing legacy. As the land around us becomes more and more precious for its ecological soundness and for its capacity to nourish our spirits and bodies, we can thank Eleanor for recognizing how important it would be to enable its healthy future. She was effective and wise. We are all the beneficiaries.

Diedra Heitzman - diedra@camphillkimberton.org - July 19, 2013 at 08:35 AM

ZZ

“ I will always remember Mrs. Morris and appreciate all she taught me while I worked with her. She was an amazing, foresighted conservationist. I am so sorry for your and my loss. Sincere sympathy. Zellen

Zellen Shelton - zashelton@yahoo.com - July 19, 2013 at 08:35 AM

AE

“ I'm Art Mauger, son of Grace Mauger, former member of St. Mary's Episcopal church in Warwick Village. I took Barbara to my Sr. Prom, she graciously invited, and I went to her Cotillion Nov. of '63. Eleanor met with "many higher ups", in the political parties. BUT she never let it go to her head. She was ALWAYS a gracious, caring, loving, friendly lady. She talked to you like a friend, even though there was a large age difference. Same & her are now walking hand in hand the Golden streets of Heaven. May God comfort all the families.

Art Mauger - edwinmauger@yahoo.com - July 19, 2013 at 08:35 AM

PS

“ What a great and wonderful lady. The County will forever be a better place having known her! Rest in Peace with your beloved Sam.

Paula M. Pennypacker - saintpmp@aol.com - July 19, 2013 at 08:35 AM

AR

“ I am very sorry for the family's and the community's loss. May Eleanor's legacy live on.

Andrew Romberger - July 19, 2013 at 08:35 AM

PR

“ With Eleanor's passing we have all lost a wonderful person and friend. All who live in or visit Chester county in the future owe both her and her Sam a debt of gratitude for their tireless efforts to preserve the natural beauty of this area. I will miss her quick wit and sense of humor. Let us all continue to the land conservation goals that she held so dear, and may she rest in peace.

Pete Rodgers - July 19, 2013 at 08:35 AM