

BOOK REVIEW ESSAY

UNDERSTANDING THE LEGACY OF PHILADELPHIA'S "GREENE COUNTRY TOWNE"

Mark Reinberger and Elizabeth McLean. *The Philadelphia Country House: Architecture and Landscape in Colonial America*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015. Pp. 430. 142 photographs, 62 line drawings, 6 maps, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth, \$69.95.

Elizabeth Milroy. *The Grid and the River: Philadelphia's Green Places, 1682–1876*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2016. Pp. 418. 187 illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth, \$64.95.

James McClelland and Lynn Miller. *City in a Park: A History of Philadelphia's Fairmount Park System*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2016. Pp. 368. 158 color photographs, 19 halftones, appendix listing over 100 parks, squares, and playgrounds, endnotes, index. Cloth, \$39.50.

Anna O. Marley. *The Artist's Garden: American Impressionism and the Garden Movement*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014. Pp. 248. Photographs, paintings, sculpture, book covers, poems, index. Cloth, \$49.95.

Eric Plaag. *On the Waters of the Wissahickon: A History of Erdenheim Farm*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2015. Pp. 176. Photographs, maps, line drawings, prints, index. Cloth, \$39.95.

Urban growth in Philadelphia ignited new attitudes about the value of green space. In the early decades of the city, elites sought to privatize access to nature. Ironically, however, the private villa estates of the wealthy eventually

became the starting point for a city-wide park system available to all. Public access to green space became enshrined as a right of citizenship.

The upper class claimed access to both city lives and country lives, a demand echoed in later years by middle- and lower-class Philadelphians. The rich often established both a townhome in center city and a country-seat just a few miles away in the hinterlands. The city life routine of business and social rounds, they insisted, required them to take time away to refocus on personal improvement and recreation of the mind and body through reading, writing, pursuing expression in the fine arts, and outdoor pursuits such as hunting and fishing. They needed to escape from the summer disease outbreaks, bad smells, noise, and crowding. Over time, some of the benefits afforded to the elites at their country-seats would become available to the remainder of Philadelphia's population through the development of a public park system.

Middle-class Philadelphians found their private green space through suburbanization as their lots became locales for landscaping and gardening. Like the elite, the middle class found connections to nature through their property, but instead of maintaining a city and country property the middle class became suburbanites, combining closeness to the center city with green space by living outside the city core. The popularity of flower gardens during the early twentieth-century Progressive Era marks a high point in middle-class manipulation of the residential landscape.

Today the park system of Philadelphia makes green space available to a diverse urban population. Philadelphia's park system offers the formerly elite privilege of city life combined with wildness, pastoral beauty, scenic views, and historic properties. A symphony of recreational opportunities awaits the twenty-first-century Philadelphian with dog parks, bike trails, neighborhood parks, rails-to-trails projects, swimming pools, and athletic facilities.

These books link William Penn's vision of Philadelphia as a "greene country towne" in the seventeenth century to the assortment and variety of green-space choices and options available today. These authors each contribute to a rich evolutionary story that explains how colonial-era rural estates and green space in and around Philadelphia created areas of recreation and parks, spurred flower gardening by the middle class, and preserved rural landscapes for the public benefit. The sensitivity toward country living in the vicinity of Philadelphia yielded places infused with pastoral and rural values worthy of preservation and, in many cases, public access. Over time, Philadelphians achieved Penn's shared "greene country towne" aesthetic as a

right of residency. This achievement has a history and it is worth the attention it has received in these books.

In Mark Reinberger and Elizabeth McLean's work *The Philadelphia Country House: Architecture and Landscape in Colonial America* the country-seat emerged as a distinct, elite, rural housing form of colonial America. The wealthy most commonly built these residential environments as second homes used seasonally to retreat from the city. These second homes became possible with wealth accrued in the city. Early Pennsylvania merchants established, by the mid-eighteenth century, an elite pattern of country-seats that emulated the bourgeois country-seats of London, a revival of the ancient Roman villa ideal. In pursuing the perfectly balanced life, elite Philadelphians built country estates on some of the most scenic lands along the Schuylkill River and its watershed. These properties shaped public perceptions of rural beauty that influenced and shaped the city's public park efforts in the nineteenth century.

The country-seat owners in the Philadelphia region developed something new, a rural lifestyle in greater harmony with urban culture following urban fashion, with the furniture and service facilities common to city life. The owners of these properties also composed views and landscaped them for aesthetic purposes, cultivating the beauty of nature as an end unto itself. Country-seats reached their pinnacle by the mid-eighteenth century but continued to be developed into the first quarter of the nineteenth century, and as this phase of elite property development continued the focus increasingly was twofold: to make a stronger statement of scenery manipulation and to blend landscape architecture and lifestyle with the Roman villa ideal as brought to America through the elite of London.

The Philadelphia Country House brings needed attention to the story of how the villa movement developed from the establishment of Pennsylvania by William Penn through the 1750s. The authors make strong use of research gathered in the preparation of unpublished historic-structure and historic-landscape reports. Both authors researched and wrote many of these studies, providing invaluable firsthand field experiences amid the historic fabric of the actual buildings, and among the documents that contributes to their narrative. This book is seminal and provides the most comprehensive treatment of this Philadelphia region building type ever published.

Reinberger and McLean present their study of the country houses of Philadelphia in three parts, examining the background and context, design principles, and specific property biographies. The first section, "Historical

Background and Regional Context,” provides background and overview of the English influence over architecture and landscape in the country house tradition of the American colonies. Just as valuable, it provides an overview of the diffusion of country houses in Philadelphia in three phases: the first-generation, middle-, and late-colonial periods. The second segment, “Elements and Principles of Country-Seat Design and Function,” examines the elements and principles of country-seat design through a discussion of the process of design and building, landscaping, and the variety of architectural and landscape aesthetic choices. The elements unifying these properties include proportion, hierarchy, room use, parade (how the spaces unfold as one travels through the property), service spaces, the working landscape, and agriculture. To achieve the Philadelphia Villa ideal required an artistic vision that took into account the proper siting of the country-seat, the potential views and prospects, and taking advantage of vistas that framed other views. Landscaping techniques helped the built environment blend into the sylvan beauty desired by the elite, with terracing in front or around a house, gardens with flowers, and garden beds adding a variety of color and food. The interplay of wild nature and a naturalistic building aesthetic found expression in the use of structures and objects as points of view or centerpieces as well as plantings sometimes forming a wilderness cut through with pathways. The third portion of the study provides a chronology of houses and styles presenting detailed analysis and in-depth discussion of over thirty-three country-seats.

The authors make an insightful argument about the individuality and diversity of these country-seats being a result of a dialectic between the individual and the social: between a need to assert an individual’s identity into creating a country-seat, and the personalities and philosophical outlooks of owners, designers, and builders that would affect the design, building, and use of such a property. A map appears as the frontispiece showing the location of fifty-five discussed or mentioned country-house or seat locations. Fifteen of that grouping remain extant today, based upon the 1752 Nicholas Scull Map focusing on greater Philadelphia County.

What is not stated in the introduction is the effect these properties had on later ideas about historic preservation. These architectural and landscape compositions in the countryside, most especially in the watershed of the Schuylkill River, often framed picturesque views from hills to waterways. These landscapes made an argument for their aesthetic values to all who passed by. This helped to increase support for granting some of the properties

permanent protection and integration into an urban park program of eventual national significance. Elite country-seats offered the scenery many Philadelphians associated with the picturesque countryside. These landscapes form a direct connection to Elizabeth Milroy's study of green places in Philadelphia through the Centennial Celebration of 1876.

The Grid and the River: Philadelphia's Green Places, 1682–1876 addresses and answers the question, how did Philadelphia's villa estates help to inspire a public park system? This park system tied together a collection of green spaces that developed in response to the growth of the city. These spaces might be the squares laid out in Penn's Plan or the scenery and pastoral landscapes set along the Schuylkill River and its immediate watershed. In the creation of Fairmount Park, the city and suburban growth patterns of Philadelphia fused to ensure continued public access to green Philadelphia, yielding a commitment by city government to provide access to nature as a key feature of the character of Philadelphia. Elizabeth Milroy assembled a collection of essays on the three themes of City, Suburb, and Consolidation, partially based upon six previously published essays focused on Penn's Squares, Fairmount Park, and the Civil War Era Sanitary Fair. That William Penn's visionary legacy endures in Philadelphia's green places, a key theme in this book, builds from a thorough discussion of Penn's vision for the growth of the city with green spaces, and the realities of how the colonial port city actually grew.

Milroy starts with Penn's Squares. Historians, she argues, need to examine how people used these green spaces to exercise their political and cultural aspirations. Some public squares were used for purposes fitting the needs of the day. By 1707 the southeast square was a potter's field, part was leased as pasture, another section became a cattle market, and later slaves were permitted to bury their dead and to gather to celebrate holidays and fair days. The center square did not develop in the manner Penn planned, as a location for religious, civic and government public buildings. Instead, the pursuit of leisure activities yielded a bowling green and tavern nearby, horse racing on what became known as Race Street, with the center square serving as staging grounds for festivals and parades, a parade ground for the local militia during the Revolution, a gathering place for Federalists and anti-Federalists, and the destination for Fourth of July celebrations. As the city expanded gardens became more common, trees were planted and walks of rolled gravel, sometimes in a serpentine direction, were laid out to enhance public buildings such as the state house.

This focus on how people used green spaces aids in the success of this study. Milroy integrates the visual evidence preserved in paintings, prints, maps, and photographs with unpublished reports by scholars, park staff, consultants, and volunteers, to form a rich tapestry of synthesized materials. This work traces the political and aesthetic significance of these sites and how they were enjoyed by people to support and define changing notions of community and citizenship. Most important, this book connects the more detailed cultural discussion of *The Philadelphia Country House* with how the renowned scenery legacy of the Schuylkill River valley resulted in preservation and reuse as parkland for the people, both complementing and competing with Penn's Squares in center city.

The second portion of *The Grid and the River* delves into the Philadelphia suburbs: the countryside that was close by center city for many decades after the city's founding. This area became attractive to elite Philadelphians for country-seats or villas similar to those built by elite Londoners in and around the Thames River. As gardens arose at the estates of the Philadelphia elite, nurseries like that of John Bartram met the needs for plants, chosen initially to evoke the London villa landscapes. From the beginning of this suburban development, middling and gentry people became tourists visiting this area to take in the scenic views. Praise of the scenic beauty of this area came from poets. Gentlemen whose wealth derived from landholdings and merchants, attorneys, physicians, and civil servants, both Quaker and non-Quaker, were most likely to own villas. By 1752 more than 200 substantial country houses stood within an eight-mile radius of the city as seen on the Nicholas Scull map. The social whirl rotated on tea parties, balls, summer picnics, winter sleigh riding, and lots of guest visitation.

After the Revolution, the new aesthetic for picturesque scenery focused upon how landscapes affected the viewer's emotional state and intellect, making the enhancement of scenery into an expressive art form widely appreciated by the public. The wilder features of villa properties included woods, broken precipices, crags, cataracts, and rivers. Moral and aesthetic benefits awaited those visiting these landscapes. The belief that views possessed therapeutic properties encouraged people to spend leisure time in these locations. The Fairmount waterworks attracted visitors who reveled in seeing the world's largest dam, the Schuylkill River, and villa properties rising among the scenery. During the second decade of the nineteenth century American social reformers promoted urban parks as therapeutic and educational opportunities to commune with nature.

Philadelphia had incomparable picturesque scenery along the Schuylkill River thanks to the villa properties. In 1836 the Laurels villa estate property became the Laurel Hill Cemetery. Although the manse came down, some of the existing landscape of fifty-year-old evergreen trees was supplemented with ornamental trees and shrubs. As the cemetery expanded other villa properties were incorporated, including the adjacent estates of Harleigh and Fairy Hill. The Woodlands Cemetery preserved the William Hamilton villa. When the fifty-two-acre Lemon Hill estate became city property in 1843 the first of these revered landscapes transferred to the public trust and ultimately became the cornerstone of a city-wide park system. Arguments for country-seat acquisition included the protection of the city from air and water pollution, and to serve as a public park, a retreat that would aid in preserving the Fairmount panorama view. In 1855 Lemon Hill was formally designated as a public park. The addition of Sedgeley gave the city 110 acres stretching from the Fairmount Water Works to the Spring Garden Water Works. James Sidney and Andrew Adams were hired to develop a plan of Fairmount Park submitted in 1859.

The designers sought to preserve and revive the landscape of the villa estates and not transform the landscape into something different; the key difference between this park and Olmstead and Vaux's plan for New York's Central Park was that in New York the terrain and vegetation were transformed to make new spaces and views insulated from the surrounding city. Long-distance views gave the Fairmount Park project significant advantages over the Central Park plan. The west bank of the Schuylkill attracted attention next under the guise of possibly saving two fine old villas at Eggesfield and Solitude. Industry remained part of the view with railroad, canal, ice houses, and factories a part of the picturesque landscape as well. Fairmount Park kept expanding as river frontage was purchased in the mistaken belief that the park would form a protective barrier against pollution while the waters would help with the water system and sewage management.

Street railways increased accessibility of the public to Fairmount and by the time of the Civil War there was a proposal to add 700 more acres on the west side of the Schuylkill. The 1867 Park Act envisioned the addition of 1200 acres to the west park as well as expansion of the east park by 150 acres, taking in lands from at least eight villa estates. By the time the Centennial Exposition closed, evidence had mounted that Fairmount Park could not protect the Schuylkill watershed from pollution. Nor could it preserve villa

estates. The park remained a work unfinished. Nevertheless, the rise in park attendance changed many once-isolated picturesque locations into crowded places altered to accommodate public demand.

Making the park accessible to a larger urban population alienated the middle- and upper-class people originally attracted to the park with the ideal of preserving the grounds and buildings of the villa era. By 1878 more than twenty villas stood within the park boundaries, yet none served as museums. All were leased as staff housing or for concessionaires. The best surviving villas would get their due only later, in the 1920s.

The city's park system began to change from a central chain of territories into a dispersed network of watershed areas, discrete neighborhood parks, and formal squares placed into the urban grid, a system fitting better with the neighborhoods of a rapidly growing Philadelphia where access to nature became more than just a means to protect water quality. Access to nature in the city had become a reasonable expectation of living in or visiting Philadelphia.

Providing access to nature as a civic right emerges as a function of government in *City in a Park: A History of Philadelphia's Fairmount Park System*. James McClelland and Lynn Miller help promote the Mayor Nutter administration (2008–2016) accomplishment of establishing a new governance system for the parks. They present today's Fairmount Park System vision as a legacy that continues to evolve to meet the needs of its citizens thanks to initiatives by the former mayor. The William Penn Foundation supported this project through their Watershed Protection Program. There is a not-always-subtle tone of boosterism for the park system in place due to the Nutter administration, but that does not negate all one can learn about how Fairmount Park reached our modern era and the recent changes in how the park system currently operates. Written for a popular audience, *City in a Park* contains beautiful color illustrations and is filled with current information to bring the story of nature in the city into the Nutter era.

Mayor Nutter pursued the goal of making Philadelphia the greenest city in America. Green space as an ideal connects today's Fairmount Park to William Penn's "greene country towne" vision laid down in the original plan of Philadelphia. Continuity between then and now exists in that green spaces have always added a salutary quality of life. In eighteen chapters and an appendix this study provides an overview of land use in Philadelphia for the water system, protecting the non-Delaware River watershed lands to ensure

clean water, the development of the park ideal in the mid-nineteenth century, the installation of public art, the Centennial Exposition, the Benjamin Franklin Parkway project in the early twentieth century, opening of house museums in some of the villas, the post–World War II decline in park maintenance, and the recent rejuvenation of the park system. In navigating these topics, the reader gains a historic overview of how the park system came to be, the modern park governance system, the types of recreation still enjoyed in the parks and their origins, and the story behind Philadelphia's rank of having the most sculpture of any American city. The appendix lists alphabetically the location and sometimes the purpose of over 100 Philadelphia parks.

Several aspects of *City in a Park* deserve mention as they mark the changing attitudes about access to nature and add new dimension to the narrative overlap of the first two reviewed books. The overarching story of how Philadelphia began to manage green space remains familiar with a search for clean drinking water leading to city acquisition of properties. People believed that Philadelphia's water quality could be protected through the purchase of lands fronting the Schuylkill River, thus protecting the citizens from the impacts of industrial development along the shoreline. Unfortunately, upstream pollution flowed right past these preserved lands and into the city water supply. Several decades would pass before the fallacy of this strategy was realized. During those interceding years, the city absorbed a fine collection of waterfront villa properties. It also acquired more land and grew its park system along with the city.

This work offers greater focus on the activities of the public in these historic green spaces still enjoyed today. Philadelphians partake in boating, eating, walking, running, cycling, attending arts performances, engaging with public art, and visiting the city zoo. The accumulation of villa properties, the incorporation of their lands into the park system with slow recognition of the preservation value of the villas themselves, emerges as an accomplishment only made as the park system and its management evolved and matured.

The improvement of the Fairmount Water Works helped to shift waterfront land use toward open space preservation. Between 1819 and 1821 a dam went up across the Schuylkill River to direct the waters to a mill house with three new waterwheels engineered to pump. The completion of the Fairmount dam, at 2,008 feet the longest dam in America at the time, changed the character of the river shoreline villa estates by creating a new four-mile stretch of recreation rapidly populated with rowers and boaters in warm weather, and ice skaters in winter. However, these expanding

recreational opportunities came at a cost to those owning nearby villas where the slack water above the dam offered stagnant waters north of the waterworks. By the 1840s pollution from upstream mills, commercial traffic on the Schuylkill Canal, and the expansion of mosquito-breeding marshes along the river banks led to a curtailment of upper-class villa life, as some estates lost their appeal to the elite and were sold to the city in an effort to protect upstream water quality.

The integration of the villa estates into the Fairmount Park System also sets Philadelphia apart from the creation of Central Park in Manhattan. When the designers of Central Park in Manhattan made park plan proposals for Philadelphia some of their ideas appear to have influenced the course of development, but they were never awarded a commission from the park commission. Central Park served Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux as a canvas to apply the principles of creating romantic landscapes that initially found favor in the private gardens of the upper class. The villa properties offered these landscapes and more already made, and the designers felt forced to modify the scale of their proposal to preserve those features.

Fairmount Park offers restored villas integrated into romantically landscaped expanses mixed with recreational destinations and activities. By the 1920s six of the surviving villas began to be restored and opened to the public in sync with the opening of period rooms to display fine art and regional material culture in the nearby Philadelphia Museum of Art. The recreational interest of historic preservation through curated house museums offered a grand reprieve for a collection of some of the finest dwellings of the region, which for seventy years only survived as employee housing, snack bars, restaurants, and drinking establishments for visitors, with several villas torn down and many architecturally and historically significant outbuildings lost due to the utilitarian practicality of destroying deteriorated buildings having little hope of restoration funding.

At the same time that the Fairmount Park System was growing in the late nineteenth century, a privatized, personal, residential park-like amenity became a part of middle-class Progressive Era identity. *The Artist's Garden: American Impressionism and the Garden Movement* offers thought-provoking discussion of how this garden movement sprang from and heralded a mixture of cultural influences including a post-Centennial surge in nationalistic feeling, immigration anxiety, pressure for universal women's suffrage, World War I and war gardens, emergence of a robust middle class, arrival of French impressionist painting and principles in American galleries and studios,

and the effect of impressionism on painting. The garden movement offers a strong connection to Philadelphia both in the interest of Philadelphians in horticulture historically, and in the spread of romantic gardening in the suburbs of the city in the early twentieth century.

Philadelphia was a national leader in the garden movement with a lineage that traces back to William Penn's vision, the establishment of John Bartram's botanical garden circa 1728, Charles Wilson Peale's garden at Belfield in the early nineteenth century, establishment of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society in 1827, with their first flower show in 1829, a new appreciation for colonial gardens after the Centennial Exposition, the first gardening efforts in 1887 on a property that became the Morris Arboretum, and the publication of *House and Garden* magazine in 1901. A sort of horticultural obsession led to organizations forming to reinforce public interest in gardening including the Garden Club of Philadelphia founded in 1904, the Pennsylvania School of Horticulture for Women founded in 1910 at the Ambler Arboretum of Temple University, and The Garden Club of America founded at Stenton in Germantown in 1913.

The emergence of horticulture as a middle-class suburban pursuit provided a new means to democratize an artistic manipulation of the environment once known only to elite estate owners. Anna O. Marley wrote the introduction to this collection of essays and traces the middle-class commuter's garden featuring native plants and wildflowers as a rejection of the labor-intensive pruned gardens that were tended by the gardeners and laborers of the estates of the robber barons. The American, colonial, and wild gardens were garden styles of this period that were seen as patriotic and appropriate for a new class of suburbanites. The emphasis and preference of native bird breeds and native flowers coincided with an era of rising immigration that led to nativist thought played out in backyard middle-class gardens.

During the Progressive Era, Philadelphia was one of the principal places where a new type of informal romantic flower gardening became a part of the ideal middle-class suburban-commuter life. The garden movement yielded thousands of private outdoor rooms, a sort of domestic park amenity held in private for the glorification of domestic American values through closeness to an orchestration of blooming plants and flowers. Impressionism celebrated both the unique beauty of particular blooms and the totality of this new suburban domestic space, making gardening an art form and a part

of a changing middle-class domestic vision of living closer to the beauty of nature in everyday life.

The *Artist's Garden* book is a set of seven essays and a catalogue of beautiful color plates exploring various aspects of what one might call the horticultural impulse in American impressionist art. It is based upon an exhibition of mostly impressionistic paintings covering the era 1887–1920. The articles and their authors include “Producing Pictures without Brushes: American Artists and Their Gardens,” Anna O. Marley; “A Desperately Aesthetic Business: Garden Art in America, 1870–1920,” Virginia Grace Tuttle; “Home of the Hummingbird: Thaxter, Hassam, and the Aesthetics of Nature Conservation,” Alan C. Braddock; “A Tendency to Outstrip Native Blossoms in Life’s Race: Nativism in Impressionist Gardens,” Erin Leary; “The Garden Painted, Planted, and Printed: Chromolithography and Impressionism in America,” Katie A. Pfohl; “American Impressionists and the Problem of Urban Parks: Conflicting Temporalities,” James Glisson; and “Designing Paradise: Women Landscape Architects and the American Country House Garden,” Judith Tankard. These articles and the artwork take on a variety of interesting themes including artist gardens, magazines that celebrated gardens, the American conservation movement, debates about immigration, new printing technologies of mass reproduction, the emerging field of landscape architecture, urban and suburban gardens, and real and ideal gardens. The ninety-one plates produced in the book include book covers, stained glass, sculpture, magazine covers, and photographs. Nearly every artist included in this catalogue, studied, or exhibited at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts during his or her lifetimes.

Three reoccurring subjects that stand out from the color plates involve paintings of impressionistic flowers, portraits of women and children in their gardens, and gardens as an outdoor room offering a privatized semi-utopian landscape of personal eccentricity and domestic enjoyment. An overarching theme to this work is the role of the American impressionistic artist in turn-of-the century gardening culture and Progressive Era concerns—that crossover between art, gardening, and politics—makes for a convincing interpretation of the significance and seriousness of gardening as a middle-class means to find harmony, resolution, and control over topical issues and concerns. The suburban romantic flower garden yielded private nature retreats in the yards of many middle-class residences,

allowing horticulture to emerge as a sort of new suburban agriculture, influenced by parks, not fields, which significant numbers of Americans enjoyed as they maintained a tactile connection to nature for aesthetic rather than monetary purposes.

The final selection in this grouping of books about green spaces in Philadelphia is a monograph on a single farm that managed to survive into the twenty-first century and now remains preserved in perpetuity. Erdenheim Farm, a property adjacent to the Morris Arboretum, survived until less than a decade ago as a privately held pastoral property that defied the pressures of real estate speculation and redevelopment. *On the Waters of the Wissahickon: A History of Erdenheim Farm* offers Eric Plaag's account of this last large farm property that was saved from development by one of the most significant land conservation transactions in the Philadelphia region, which culminated in 2009 with the preservation of this 450-acre estate located just beyond the Chestnut Hill section of Philadelphia. A pastoral landscape now permanently preserved, Erdenheim Farm remains one of the last farm estates along the Wissahickon Creek located in the vicinity of Philadelphia, and thus represents the perseverance of an ideal, the preservation of the elite estate farm landscape, as a community supported amenity and green space.

The fight to save Erdenheim Farm began in 2001 when owner Fitz Eugene Dixon Jr. planned to sell 54 acres of the farm to build a retirement community. Developers planned to create 150 cottages and 175 apartment and other assisted-living care facilities to be called the Hill at Whitemarsh. Hundreds of residents turned out at the public meetings in opposition to the proposal, which the planning commission then rejected. The developers countered with a plan that tucked new construction behind a ridge minimizing the impact, set aside a twelve-acre buffer to protect views from the farm, and they agreed to fund the Whitemarsh Foundation to work to preserve the rest of Erdenheim. The Montgomery County Redevelopment Authority found a way to funnel over \$1 million in new property taxes from the development into preserving parts of the farm. Dixon died in 2006 in the middle of this process. The Montgomery County Commissioners pledged \$4 million in funding and gained another million from a Keystone Grant. Whitemarsh Township pledged nearly \$2 million, and \$4.5 million came as part of a settlement from Merck from a chemical spill. Montgomery County gave a \$2-million open space grant to the project. A group of ten individuals worked out a deal to preserve

the final portions of the farm. In addition to the 117 acres preserved by the Natural Lands Trust, at least 300 acres received permanent protection mostly through conservation easements and the farm remains a working livestock farm. All but twenty-three acres of the land is now protected from development by preservation easements.

Erdenheim Farm remains one of the last sanctuaries of pastoral life within the greater Philadelphia area and, like a portion of the villa landscapes of an earlier era, the citizens of the Philadelphia region will continue to live with this portion of the countryside continuing to survive in perpetuity. The Erdenheim Farm remains protected from further development, the pastoral views of fields, livestock, and agricultural activity remain, and the support to fund such a land conservation victory united residents, local government, foundations, and advocates for limited adjacent development into a visionary coalition.

The parks and green spaces of Philadelphia remain a legacy born of distinct phases of urban growth fortified by evolving ideas about the need for citizens to have some degree of access to nature. When William Penn set out to establish Philadelphia he envisioned a “greene country towne” with five public squares. The elite of the colonial era privatized their access to nature by emulating the landed gentry of London building country-seats with scenic views of the Schuylkill watershed, yet the expansive nature of their holdings made these mixtures of architecture set upon romantic and pastoral landscapes part of everyday life for those living or passing nearby. To preserve the city’s drinking water quality in the early nineteenth century some of these properties became city property and were reimaged for recreational purposes. Gradually, a park system developed in Philadelphia that has democratized citizen access to landscapes once privately adored by the elite and now overseen by city government. As the popularity of these parks led to overcrowding, Progressive Era suburban residents began to establish private flower gardens on their lots. They created a social movement that privatized their access to nature through the practice of horticulture and created outside rooms to refine their access to nature. The pressure for denser development has eliminated all but the most fought-for properties such as Erdenheim Farm in Whitemarsh Township, one of the last preserved working farms in the Philadelphia region.

With the passage of time, enjoying the benefits of green space has become a right of citizenship afforded by elected officials, and land conservation has evolved into an effort of regional partnerships designed to affect the

opportunity for citizens to live a better life in a greener environment. William Penn's "greene country towne" has grown to be thirteen percent of Philadelphia's acreage, offering opportunities for nearly all citizens and visitors to balance the urban landscape with areas of natural beauty and outdoor recreation.

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