

Eleanor May Morris of Pughtown 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.

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. 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. Mrs. Morris became involved in the Chester County Democratic Party shortly after moving to 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.

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 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; nine great-grandchildren; and sisters Anita Kuhn and Elise Felton.

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