



# Hunterdon Land Trust

Protecting the places you love

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## **Hunterdon Land Trust Spreads Holiday Cheer With Charlie Brown Christmas Tree Farm Preservation**

HOLLAND TOWNSHIP, NJ – The Hunterdon Land Trust is helping spread a little holiday cheer with the preservation of the 127-acre Charlie Brown Christmas Tree Farm in Holland Township.

The farm, owned by Randy and Charlie Brown III, includes the 50-acre Christmas tree farm, wetlands, woodlands and a log cabin with a hilltop view to Upper Bucks County that would make any heart merry and bright.

Six acres owned by the Browns are not included in the preservation. This portion includes an 1850s-era farm house, several barns and a windmill, built in the mid-1960s and operated for several decades as a museum.

Patience and persistence paid off in this preservation effort that began in September 2005. Former HLT Trustee Larry LaFevre knocked on the door of the farm house on Adamic Road to ask Charles T. Brown Jr., if the family had ever considered preserving the land.



“I knew about the property for a long time and admired it,” LaFevre said. “I didn’t know if they would be interested in preserving the property when I approached them, and they were a little skeptical at first.”

But Charles T. Brown Jr. warmed to the idea. He had many wonderful memories as a boy visiting the farm, when his Aunt May and Uncle Stanley Folk then owned it. The Folks had no children of their own, but every weekend welcomed a gaggle of nieces and nephews who tromped the hills, played in the grass and fished in a nearby stream.

Charles T. Brown Jr. and his wife Lorraine helped out at the farm and at the Volendam Windmill Museum during May’s elder years, and one of his sons, Charlie Brown III, later moved next door to lend a hand. In the 1980s, the elder Charlie started planting Christmas trees. When May passed away, Charlie Jr. and Lorraine inherited the property.

“My Dad always said this was a wonderful place to be as a kid,” said Randy Brown. “He was a big outdoorsman who loved to hunt and fish, and loved green, open spaces. And he didn’t like developments and things like that. As he got older, he got more into this preservation, and Hunterdon Land Trust was very helpful with this whole thing. As time passed, he would say more and more that the boys want to keep this preserved as farmland.”

And both sons appreciate their dad’s decision. “It’s beautiful here. I don’t think people outside this area think of places like this when they think of New Jersey, and that’s kind of sad because of lot of New Jersey is rolling hills and farmland and forests,” Randy said.

“This is really a wonderful community,” Charlie Brown III agreed. “I was a lucky guy to be raised here, and to raise my family on the farmland.”

“The Charlie Brown Christmas Tree Farm is a beautiful and iconic property that represents Hunterdon County’s rich cultural and agricultural history,” said Patricia Ruby, HLT executive director. “It’s quite diverse with its woodlands, wetlands and open meadows, and offers the additional advantages of being adjacent to state-preserved farmland and near a small stream.”

The State Agriculture Development Committee, Hunterdon County and Holland Township assisted in this preservation effort. Sadly, Charles T. Brown Jr. didn’t live to see the preservation through to its completion, passing away on Father’s Day, June 19, 2016.

Although the Christmas tree brought home by Charlie Brown in the holiday cartoon classic was a scrawny, wobbly stick, the trees on this Charlie Brown’s Christmas Tree Farm are thick and tall Douglas Firs, noted Kathy Brown, who lives in the historic farm house with her husband, Randy. The tree farm is open Fridays through Sundays, after Thanksgiving until Christmas Eve. Every tree on the lot is \$45.



Now with the farm in preservation, the family is considering ways to grow the Charlie Brown Christmas Tree Farm. The brothers want to expand the farm operation – one option is growing great pumpkins -- and they need to consider the future of the windmill.

After Stanley Folk died in 1961, his wife May married “a gentleman who lived down the lane,” Randy said. Poul Jorgensen was an engineer, a master machinist and inventor who held several patents. He also had an affinity for windmills. He designed and built the seven-story Volendam Windmill, and opened it as a Museum. Often dressed in authentic Dutch costumes, Poul and May would give tours of the windmill, showing off old tools, ancient millstones and wooden shoes.

When Poul passed away in 1983, May continued running the Museum until her death a decade later. Despite the sails being damaged by Hurricane Sandy, the windmill still stands on a grassy knoll overlooking Adamic Road, a resilient reminder of the Jorgensens’ ingenuity and hard work.

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