



Keeping Lands in Family Hands

Nestled in the hills of Adams County, Pennsylvania lies a fifth-generation family farm, Boyer Nurseries & Orchards.

Purchased in 1900 by the patriarch, W.W. Boyer, [Boyer Nurseries & Orchards](#) has grown in both business ventures and family members.

Today, the farm includes a nursery, garden center, wine and cider tasting room and fruit market, and grows a variety of fruits including cherries, blueberries, apricots, peaches, plums, pears and more than 20 varieties of apples.

The farm is in the Adams County fruit belt, which is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, and an important agricultural landscape in the county.

"We've always considered this valley with the woodland and orchards just special," said Emma Lower, fifth-generation farmer. "My great grandmother and great-great aunt spoke a lot about stewardship of the land and conservation and they always said if anything ever happens to the farm, try and preserve this part of it as much as you can."

And that's just what the Lowers did.

USDA Assistance

With the help of the USDA's [Natural Resources Conservation Service](#) and the [Land Conservancy of Adams County](#), the Lowers will be able to keep their land in agriculture forever.

The Lower family entered parts of their land into four separate conservation easements, which are voluntary legal agreements tailored to the landowner's wishes.

While the family keeps ownership of the land, the Natural Resources Conservation Service purchases the developmental rights and the right to maintain the property in agriculture, now and in perpetuity. Altogether, the Lower family has preserved more than 900 acres of the Home Farm.

"For me, it's peace of mind knowing that this land is protected. I would never want to see a high-density subdivision in this area and the destruction of natural resources," said Emma. After seeing the Lowers' commitment to keeping this unique landscape in agriculture, other landowners joined in. They've enrolled thousands of acres into easements creating a huge stretch of continuously preserved properties in the area.



“Food brings people together, so it’s great to provide fresh fruit and produce we can share with others. I’m grateful for just the beauty of nature and being part of it every day,” said Emma. And thanks to the conservation easement, it will be every day forever.

Celebrating Easements

This year, USDA is celebrating 25 years of conservation easements. Together with partners and landowners, we’re helping ensure the long-term sustainability of American agriculture. We’re grateful for farmers, like the Lowers, stepping up to the plate to be part of the solution for the past 25 years, and we want to continue this work into the future.

Are you a private landowner interested in a conservation easement? Agricultural land easements provide funds to partners, such as state and local governments, Indian tribes and non-profits, to purchase conservation easements on agricultural lands.

For more information about USDA programs and services, contact your [local USDA service center](#).

Story and Photo Credits: Ciji Taylor, Natural Resources Conservation Service