

“This Land is Your Land, This Land is My Land”:

**D&R GREENWAY GALA, 2012 DONALD B. JONES CONSERVATION
AWARD TO FLEMER FAMILY**

A milestone in conservation was celebrated at the Greenway Gala on Sunday, September 9. D&R Greenway Land Trust presented their 2012 Donald B. Jones Conservation Award to the Flemer family of Princeton Nurseries fame.

As golden light streamed through the branches of a 350-year-old oak tree, the Stretto Youth Orchestra surprised the Flemer family with a beautiful rendition of Woody Guthrie’s *This Land is Your Land, This Land is My Land*, moving some to tears.

D&R Greenway chose the Flemers for this year’s Donald B. Jones Conservation Award because of their preservation, on August 16, 2012, of the Allentown site of Princeton Nurseries. This 1,900-acre-transaction, at \$28-million, represents the largest farmland-and-open-space-protection in state history. The land encompasses nearly three square miles in Monmouth, Mercer and Burlington Counties. D&R Greenway facilitated discussions between the state and the Flemer family, structuring the application for preservation to the New Jersey Green Acres Program and the State Farmland Development Committee.

D&R Greenway President & CEO Linda Mead declared, “This is the largest and most significant preservation in New Jersey history. It would not have happened without the sustained cooperation of many people – Flemer family members, as well as state agencies –pulling together for the common good.” Speaking to the seventeen members of the Flemer family, who had traveled from both coasts to attend, Ms. Mead noted, “You have made a once-in-a-generation decision that will affect all generations to come.”

Attorney for the landowners, and a trustee of D&R Greenway, Richard Goldman, Esquire, asserted that “In my 22 years of land preservation, the Flemer transaction was the most interesting and the most complex --requiring the most patience from any landowner in getting the deal done.”

“This land could have been 8,000 houses,” said Rich Boornazian, Assistant Commissioner of the NJ DEP, which provided more than half of the funding. “There are 4.8 million acres in the state of New Jersey. One-quarter of those are permanently protected.” He continued, “With 1.9 million acres left to preserve, on behalf of the Governor, I want to thank the Flemer family for their dedication and vision. There are now 1,900 fewer acres for us to preserve.”

William Flemer, IV, --great grandson of the founder of Princeton Nurseries--, spoke on behalf of the family. It was his father, William Flemer III, and his uncle, John Flemer, who built the nursery to world renown after WW II. “As a society,

we don't have many opportunities to preserve beautiful old places, given the pressures of growth and the resulting suburban sprawl, especially in New Jersey.” He continued, “It’s odd to ride through the countryside and think that once it was ours. We’ve turned a page on that now. It is time for the next families to make their memories on the land. Companies come and go – Princeton Nurseries was in business almost 100 years. People are born and die. But the land lasts forever.”

BACKGROUND

D&R Greenway Track Record: Since 1989, D&R Greenway has preserved 26.5 square miles in central New Jersey. Richard S. Goldman, attorney for the Bill Flemer family, and former Chairman of the land trust’s Board of trustees, has facilitated preservation of thousands of acres. “When D&R Greenway preserved the 400-acre St. Michaels Orphanage land we recognized that it was the size of all of Hopewell Borough,” he said. “Princeton Nurseries land is more than four times that size.

Princeton Nurseries History: Princeton Nurseries, founded in 1913 by William Flemer, I, became internationally renowned for providing strong cultivars of exceptional beauty. Princeton Nurseries, at its Kingston site, became one of the largest commercial nurseries in the country.

Flemer family history: “Growing up in the middle of Princeton Nurseries in Kingston instilled in me a love for that place and that business, as it had done for my father and grandfather,” says Bill Flemer, great grandson of the founder of Princeton Nurseries. “Being named William Flemer IV gave me the message that continuing the lifework of the three preceding William Flemers was an honorable undertaking.”

D&R Greenway’s Donald B. Jones Award: Donald B. Jones (1911-1994) was a determined preservationist, whose life was dedicated to saving land and historic buildings, protecting the unique character of our region. The Donald B. Jones award is conveyed annually to an individual or group embodying D&R Greenway's core mission -- to inspire and fulfill a conservation ethic by connecting people to the land. It has been presented to a New Jersey Governor, a member of the Congress and to local heroes since 1995.