



Miller Baker Farm - Stafford

HIGHLIGHTS

**THANKS TO CFT DONORS, WE
HAVE GOOD NEWS TO SHARE:**

4 Farms protected
in 202

13 CT FarmLink matches made
between farmland seekers
and owners over two years

40 Farmland owners who worked
with CFT to assess their properties'
readiness for connection to a new
farmer via CT FarmLink

479 Farmland acres protected
forever in 2023

YOU Our Hero (not technically
a number, but still true!)



PHOTO: CARLA MCELROY

Protecting Farmland is Personal

*– Kimball Cartwright with
Keith Stechschulte*

You have your own
reasons for protecting
farmland, no? I mean the
reasons that are yours
alone, the stories that
shaped your adult self.

You wouldn't be alone,
this work is personal for
CFT's board members,
too. I sat down with Keith
Stechschulte, Executive
Vice President at Farm
Credit East and CFT's
Board Chair, to ask why
he invests his time, talent,
and financial support to
protect farmland.

"First, I was born and
raised on a grain farm in
Ohio, and my dad, brother
and sister-in-law and their

children still farm that land
today," Keith replied. "As
I grew up, I thought I'd
be a farmer, but became
a farm banker instead,
discovering a love of ag
economics and finance."

His connection to food
and soil is still there. "I
always visit my family to
help harvest in the fall,
and still really enjoy sitting
in the tractor for a couple
days, combining beans
or shelling corn." Keith
admitted with a smile,
"I'm cheap help, not
great help."

Keith's face lit up as he
talked about agricultural
economics and his current
profession. He offered that

continued inside

Preserving the Past, *Cultiva*

By Layla Ennis and Kimball Cartwright

“We believe agriculture is a way of life; it is not easy, but three of our children have chosen that life,” John Horan remarked. John and Damaris Horan are the parents of Patrick and Quincy Horan, owners and operators of Waldingfield Farm in Washington, Connecticut. As the property owners, the couple recently decided to preserve 78 acres of their land as farmland forever.

We were curious to learn more about what motivated the couple to take the significant step to preserve their land in perpetuity.

As we drove up the long gravel driveway, remnants of the recent winter storm still lingered in scattered puddles. To the right of the driveway, the old white farmhouse with its sprawling covered porch

came into view. Stepping out of the car, we could not help but feel like we were looking at the quintessential image of an old New England farm.

Damaris greeted us on the porch and welcomed us into the farmhouse’s kitchen. We settled in with a cup of tea, and our conversation swiftly turned to the rich familial history of the property. The family’s connection to this land began in 1918 when Damaris’ grandfather, Clarence B. Smith, a New York City lawyer, with a love of dairy farming, bought the vacant farm. While the property served as a summer home for his family, he also bought a herd of registered Holsteins and operated the farm, with a local manager, as a working dairy farm.

When Clarence died unexpectedly in 1932, his widow, Catherine C. Smith, closed the

dairy farm and leased the land to local farmers for hay and cattle corn production. While some of the pastureland has overgrown into woods over the years, this leasing arrangement meant that actively farmed areas remained pasture. The Horans’ records show that their land has been continually worked for at least the past 150 years.

Waldingfield Farm’s transition into organic vegetables began in 1990, when the Horans’ eldest son, Daniel, expressed an interest in growing certified organic vegetables. “He came to us and said, ‘We could use this land to grow food for the community,’” John recalled. “He envisioned it as a community-supported agriculture (CSA) organic farm, focusing on growing food that people would eat.”

To achieve certification as an organic farm, the soil health had

**YOU CAN
PROTECT
FARMLAND
FOREVER**

with a gift in your will.

We are inspired by your stories and reasons for wanting to protect farmland. Please contact Kimball Cartwright anytime for a confidential discussion regarding how you can protect CT farmland forever.



nting the Future

to meet specific standards. Non-organic pesticides and fertilizers had been used by farmers who had leased the land for decades of hay and corn production. It took Daniel over five years to rejuvenate the soil's health with organic alternatives, to obtain organic farming certification. Regarding Dan's focus and singularity of purpose, Damaris emphasized, "His grandfather, C. B. Smith, would have been delighted to turn the care of the land over to him."

Although Damaris and John are not farmers themselves, their youngest children, twins Patrick and Quincy, found the same passion as their older brother. In thirty years, the three sons have turned Waldingfield Farm into a successful organic vegetable farm. The farm business is now owned and run by Patrick and Quincy.

In 2019, the Horans decided to begin the preservation process for their land. "We see it as a family investment and a good thing," John said. They were driven both by a desire to invest in their children's passions and to conserve the natural beauty in Washington. "The farms, they are vanishing. Actually digging and working the land is rare," John added, emphasizing the importance of their decision. "We don't want to see houses back there where the vegetables are,"

Damaris concurred, gesturing out the window toward the fields.

Land preservation is a complex and often lengthy process. "Connecticut Farmland Trust's role was to help John and Damaris navigate two complex government processes," explained Kathleen Doherty, Connecticut Farmland Trust's (CFT) Senior Conservation Manager. John admitted that at times the progress of the preservation project was unclear. However, he expressed gratitude for Kathleen's assistance, "Kathleen was the only person who could hold my hand with some authority and give me confidence it would happen."

After four years, 78 acres of Waldingfield Farm were finally preserved in October of 2023. Damaris and John Horan have four children and six grandchildren. They have arranged their estate to pass the easement on to the next generations, ensuring that the land's long legacy of farming remains.



SAVE THE DATES

Inspirational Insider Tours

Every day the news media pumps out grim news reports regarding farming. How can CFT remain so positive about the future? Let us show you in person.

Come join us at three farms that will fill your soul with inspiration.

Watch your email for more information, including prices and how to register. Not on our email list but want to be? Reach out to Kimball at kcartwright@ctfarmland.org or 860-247-0202, x223.

Greenwood Holistic Farm, Ellington – Saturday, June 29th

CFT donors helped this farm twice – first helping preserve it, and then helping us match it to new farmers Dan and Tina Greenwood. At Greenwood Holistic Farm, you'll learn the economics of a small livestock farm based in regenerative farming principles.

Waldingfield Farm, Washington – Sunday, September 22nd

This farm's history is featured in this newsletter! Always innovative and upbeat, Patrick and Quincy Horan will provide a tour of this certified organic diversified vegetable farm and offer insights on how their unique



PHOTO: CASTLE HILL FARM

business models are keeping the property as working land.

Thorncrest Farm, Goshen – TBD

A perennial favorite CFT tour, join farmer and chocolatier Kimberly Thorn as she walks you through how the farm provides a sustainable environment for their family of happy, long-lived cows. You'll learn how this innovative farm is thriving and taste the best artisanal milk chocolate made anywhere.

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“the best way to preserve farmland is to have viable farms.” He is passionate about new farmers in CT, saying “the future of feeding this country is young farmers,” and adding, “as a lender, it's exciting to see farms grow and evolve down multiple generations and to see new farmers get started as well.”

“Obviously I enjoy working with numbers, but I wouldn't want to work in banking in any other sector,” Keith said before offering, “farmers are some of the best, hard-working, and honest people.” He added “From where I sit, I'm very positive

about the future for CT farms and CFT's work is a key component of my positive outlook.”

Weighing in why he supports CFT in so many ways, Keith added “We don't have the personal resources to protect farmland and support new farmers ourselves, so my wife Deana and I are proud to be part of the small yet mighty community of 450 people who give generously to CFT to do this work and take seriously my role as board member to keep us strategically focused on the work that will make the most difference.”

What inspires you to get

involved? Thank you for your confidence in us to do this important work. I'd love to hear from you, and you can reach me at kcartwright@ctfarmland.org or 860-247-0202, x223.



Kimball Cartwright
Development Director



Keith Stechschulte
CFT Board Chair