



NEWS

For Release: April 5, 2006
Contact: Hope Gruzlovic (609) 984-2504

SADC Preserves 102-Acre Medford Farm Rich in History

Agriculture Secretary Charles M. Kuperus today announced the preservation of the 102-acre E.C. Jennings Associates farm in Medford Township, Burlington County.

“Each farm we preserve represents another building block in our efforts to ensure a strong agricultural industry that will continue to benefit generation after generation of New Jerseyans,” said Secretary Kuperus, who chairs the State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC). “We appreciate the commitment of the Jennings family to farmland preservation and are pleased to welcome their farm to the Farmland Preservation Program.”

The SADC purchased the development rights to the farm from E.C. Jennings Associates. E.C. Jennings Associates consists of Lillian E. Jennings and her daughters Sally Ann Jennings of Baltimore, Mary Beth Jennings Melton of Philadelphia and Judith Jennings of Medford, who operates a law practice from the Benjamin Wilkins house. The Wilkins house, which dates back to 1785, is one of two historically significant homes on the farm.

According to Judith Jennings, her grandfather purchased the farm at a sheriff’s sale in the early 1900s. It stayed in the family, and in the 1950s her parents purchased it from an uncle. Her father, Dr. Edward C. Jennings, was an ophthalmologist who raised beef, cattle and pigs, and also grew fruits, vegetables and field crops. He passed away in 1999. Today, the land is leased to another relative, Joe Jennings and his wife Karen of Walnford Stud, a thoroughbred breeding operation in Allentown.

“It was my dad’s wish to have the farm preserved,” says Judith Jennings, who notes her family is strongly interested in preserving not only land but also history. She finished restoration work begun by her mother on another historic house on the farm, the Nail House, which dates back to the mid-1800s. Originally located at what is now Main Street and Friends Avenue, the Nail House was a store operated by Mark Reeve who reportedly built the first machine in the country to make cut nails and is said to have first proposed the town’s name of Medford.

The SADC purchased the development rights to the Jennings farm for \$1,535,025 under its direct easement purchase program. When landowners sell their development rights, they continue to own the land but it is permanently deed-restricted for agricultural use.

The SADC administers New Jersey’s Farmland Preservation Program. A total of 1,362 farms covering 144,686 acres have been preserved statewide, including five farms covering 1,085 acres in Medford.

###