



Easement Donor Profile

Cameron and Adele McIntyre, Fletcher Farm, New Church, VA

It was a foggy, damp December morning when we drove up to visit the McIntyres on Fletcher Farm. Fletcher Farm is a 90 acre farm located near New Church, Virginia in Accomack County and bordered to the South by Bullbegger Creek. We drove up the drive to the house, the main section dates to 1785. The historic house was dismantled and moved to the farm from Mappsville, VA after the McIntyres purchased the land. We were greeted by their youngest son, Caleb, 6, beaming and almost bouncing on his toes with excitement and then his smiling older counterpart Miles, 10. Both were dressed up for their pending portrait and bursting to play outside. Cameron and his wife, Adele, ushered us into the hallway, through the kitchen and dining room, and to the living room with a fire in the fireplace and the Christmas tree lights shining.

Cameron, a decoy carver and landscape painter, is originally from Beaufort, South Carolina. As a teenager, he visited the Shore on vacation and fell in love with the landscape particularly the area he now lives in, Pitts Neck. He moved here in 1989 and has lived on the Shore for 23 years. Adele, Account Executive at New Ravenna, is from Central Maine and has been a Shore resident for 18 years. Cameron and Adele bought Fletcher Farm in 1997. The farm wasn't for sale at the time but things just fell into place for the McIntyres.

Fletcher farm is a working farm. It's a place to hunt, fish, and build and walk nature trails. The family has built nature trails using only snips and hand saws, work their sons enjoy so much they ask to do it again and again. Cameron hunts with his sons, making a meal from what they bag. The boys build forts, climb trees, plant trees, play in the marsh and the ponds, work in the vegetable garden with Adele, ride their bikes, and even keep nature journals, where they record the things they see and learn. They know plants like millet, cattail, bulrush, and foxtail.

The farm is also Cameron's muse. He has painted around 300 paintings of the farm. He says, "The land



Garden at Fletcher Farm | Photograph by Peter Henderson

inspires me constantly. Even if I have painted a tree 10 times, it looks different each day and each season. There are a million things to paint on this farm. You just have to let it speak to you. I could paint here forever."

As a kid, Cameron was interested in conservation. A born naturalist, he even gave speeches on the importance of wetlands in high school. Despite his lifelong interest, he first learned of conservation easements when friends in Maryland bought land and then sold the development rights. Soon after, he read about the newly formed Virginia Eastern Shore Land Trust in the *Eastern Shore News*. As soon as he read the article, he sent in a donation, beginning his relationship with the VES Land Trust as a member.

In 2006 when they decided to put their land under easement, they knew who to turn to. They also understood the commitment—their land would never be developed or subdivided. It would remain a working farm as well as a place to hunt and fish. Cameron felt sure it was the right thing to do. "Human nature is restless. A lot of the time people change the very thing they were attracted to in the first place. Not being from here, I realized what I liked about it and haven't changed it. Sometimes the best change to make is no change," Cameron said.



Clockwise: Cameron, Adele, Miles, and Caleb McIntyre at Fletcher Farm | Photograph by Hali Plourde-Rogers

In fact, when laying out the specifics for the easement, Cameron and Adele decided not to leave parcels out of the easement for their sons. They wanted to preserve the farm in its natural state and wanted to protect the whole farm. But he also wanted the farm in the future to be the same for the boys as it has been in their childhood. Parceling out lots for them would eventually fragment and degrade the land.

Cameron also recognizes how much we have to learn from nature. While he considers himself a knowledgeable naturalist, his land teaches him every day. An out-of-state friend told him there were salamanders on the Eastern Shore. Cameron was doubtful. He checked his field guide, which confirmed there are salamanders. Still Cameron doubted. Shortly after, Cameron and his family went camping on their property. While camping, Miles found two salamanders. "There are new surprises all the time and all kinds of things that I don't even know about," he said. Conservation easements help preserve natural habitat and give those surprises a chance to teach future generations.

As we talked about motivations for placing a conservation easement, Cameron mentioned his home

town and its surroundings, which used to be beautiful. However, most of the undeveloped areas have been repeatedly subdivided, leaving little of the natural beauty. Now, he says, each person has their 1-2 acres and every creek has 100 docks. He wanted to help preserve the natural beauty of the Eastern Shore because, "some areas deserve to be protected."

For Cameron and his family, donating a conservation easement was never about the money: "Before we even knew what the value of the donated conservation easement on our property was, we would have done it." The McIntyres were all in from the start. Additionally, Cameron believes that in 50 years a property with an easement will be worth more than one without especially if adjacent to other protected properties. For Cameron, donating the easement "was a huge piece of mind. When I walk out on the farm amidst the ducks and geese, I think, 'I've done my part.'"

Although Cameron admits he is not particularly a fan of Andy Warhol, as we were leaving, he left us with this quote:

"I think having land and not ruining it is the most beautiful art that anybody could ever want to own."

—Andy Warhol