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Walnut farm is purchased as parkland

Nearly \$1 million deal will protect Floyds Fork

By James Bruggers

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Patricia Peterson said she felt her late husband's spirit when she completed a deal to sell the 98-acre walnut plantation he had nurtured since 1972.

"I knew he was smiling down on us," she said yesterday of Rolleigh Peterson.

Louisville and state officials announced the joint purchase yesterday. The property, which metro officials called the largest known walnut plantation east of the Mississippi River, will ultimately become publicly accessible parkland.

"This purchase protects a stunning piece of property alongside Taylorsville Road and represents another move forward in our City of Parks plan," Metro Mayor Jerry Abramson said.

"Our children and grandchildren will stroll among Rolleigh Peterson's orderly rows of walnut trees while learning lessons about ecology and stewardship, thanks to our partnership with the Kentucky Division of Forestry," Abramson said.



The late Rolleigh Peterson planted 98 acres of walnut trees for his daughter, Susan.



Courier-Journal file photos

The purchase of the Peterson property will protect nearly three-quarters of a mile of Floyds Fork and help future generations learn about the land and environment. The farm is along Taylorsville Road.

The farm at 15101 Taylorsville Road was bought with \$700,000 from the Kentucky Heritage Land Conservation Fund, along with \$292,390 donated to the Louisville Metro Parks Foundation by David and Betty Jones, city officials said.

It's the latest addition of protected open space in the Floyds Fork area of eastern Jefferson County, where the Jones family has been working with the city to establish a greenway.

City officials said the acquisition permanently protects nearly three-quarters of a mile of Floyds Fork. The stream curves around the northern and eastern edges of the property, just north of Taylorsville Road.

The property is southeast of a corridor along Floyds Fork where Jones' group, 21st Century Parks, recently completed a master plan for parkland and green space.

Metro government and the state will jointly own the walnut plantation and will work together to develop a management plan for it.

Metro Parks officials haven't set a date to open the property to the public, but it will be after the management plan is done.

Rolleigh Peterson, a former homebuilder and civic volunteer, planted the walnut trees for his daughter, Susan Peterson Trendel, Patricia Peterson said. Trendel died in 1998, and Rolleigh Peterson died in 2005.

"It was going to be her legacy," Patricia Peterson said of their daughter. "Now it's turned into both their legacies."

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