



## A Restoration Talks Back



Box 212  
Lionville, Pa 19353

Dear Doctor Bodo Otto:

Wherever you are, do you remember me—The Uwchlan Meeting House? On the first month, eighth day, 1778 you appeared at my door and, as Director and Surgeon General of the Continental Army Hospital at Yellow Springs, demanded the key. The Friend who had the key refused to surrender it, so you resorted to "forcible entry" in order to make a hospital in Red Lyon (now Lionville) for sick soldiers. Yellow Springs (now Chester Springs) is twelve miles from Valley Forge and Red Lyon three miles beyond. They say I was the first church in the neighborhood to be commandeered for this purpose.

You had much trouble getting provisions for the hospitals, including straw, which was the only bed the soldiers had. In spite of adversities, Dr. Potts wrote on April 7, 1778 that he had visited Yellow Springs and Red Lyon Hospitals and they were in excellent order and not overcrowded, but due to the increase in sickness they would soon be full. Later I went back to being a Meeting House, but you remained at Yellow Springs until it closed in September, 1781.



**Earliest Print of the Uwchlan Meeting House**

My old stone walls have seen many events and changes. I was used as a Library and a school by the Friends. From 1806-1932 I was used as a Public School.

This notice appeared on February 28, 1837: "Pursuant to adjournment, an Anti-Slavery meeting will be held at Friends' Meeting House in Lionville, on the 6th of 3rd month next at 6 p.m. The friends of the cause, male and female, are respectfully invited to attend."

Evan Lewis, Sec'y.

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By the time the Civil War came, 80 years, later, the Friends offered the Meeting House as a hospital, as they were all in favor of the abolition of slavery and the great work of the Underground Railroad. Some of the patients wrote their names on my walls, where they still remain.

Many picnics were held for the "First Day Schools", meetings weddings, and funerals. Following are "Extracts from the Diary of Mrs. Ann Warder":

"7 mo. 22d. - The intelligence about the untimely death of Robert Valentine at first was rather a shock to me, and I felt a particular inclination to attend his funeral, though Johnny could not accompany me. I walked to Uncle Head's whose daughter Sukey, Billy

Sansom and cousin John proposed setting out after dinner. I then walked to my fellow travelers before and found Hussy not able, but Sammy (Fisher) willing to take me, which rejoiced me, because he has a steady horse and knows the road. I returned to dine and about three o'clock we set out and got to Darby so near tea time that our cousin Parker insisted on our stopping, after which we set forward again, and learning that the friend with whom we expected to spend the night was too near, lead us to fix on the Paoli Tavern which we reached at half-past nine. After a good dish of coffee we retired to bed and I early to sleep, but my companion Sukey Head did not get much as she imagined mice were in the room.

7 mo. 23d. - At four o'clock we were aroused and got up just as day was breaking. We had twelve miles to go which we accomplished before seven. Billy and Sukey went to the burial house, but Sammy and I concluded to stop at Joshua Baldwin's where I dressed for meeting and got breakfast, and then walked over to the house. We sat in the room with the corpse, whose features looked just as when alive - he was laid in one of his own shirts with a sheet first put into the coffin, which looked much more natural and comfortable than our woolen except his having no cap on. That I never remember seeing before.

Afterwards we walked to Friend Baldwin's where we got our chaise and departed for the meeting (Uwchlan) two miles distant. We concluded to leave the multitude, not less I believe than five hundred and mostly on horseback, and take another route. I never saw the like, full half appeared to be women who are here very shiftable if they have a good creature, - which is what all in this part of the country call horses, - they ride by themselves with a safeguard which when done with is tied to the saddle and the horse hooked to a rail, standing all meeting time almost as still as their riders sit. The carrying of the corpse I did not like, as it was only corded on to a thing like the bottom part of a single horse chaise, which is the general mode here when the distance is too far for shoulder (carriers) except that a box in the shape of a coffin is fixed and the corpse slipped in. The burying ground adjoined the meeting house and dear Robert with solemnity was interred, and after standing a few minutes at the grave, we all went in. We had a very long but comfortable meeting, and several Friends spoke.

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After the Friends numbers decreased in the area, I was sold to the Uwchlan Grange in 1920. That group also gradually disappeared and in 1963 my new owner was the Woman's Community Club of Uwchlan. I was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973 and in 1976 my new, and I hope LAST owner was the Uwchlan Conservation Trust, Inc.

In 1875 some "improvements" were the addition of a porch and two small chimneys at the peak of my roof (we used iron stoves then). But, alas the Victorian porch became a hazard and had to come down, exposing my "dirty face"! The architects say I need something called "exploratory demolition" to tell them how I looked when I was young—I KNOW, but they will have to find out for themselves! In the meantime I'm hoping that it won't be too long before they can afford to have my "face-lift" so I can once again look my real self.

Respectfully yours,  
THE UWCHLAN  
MEETING HOUSE