

THOUGHTS – 2013

Our Changing Demographics - Where were you in 1963?

If you lived in the village of Lionville in Uwchlan Township you were agriculture oriented with few people going to college. Routes 100 & 113 were two lane roads and there were farms on all corners of the crossroads. Uwchlan Township had one voting place at the Lionville Firehouse, a small room on the west end of the building (site of Lionville School of Dance), not the facility you see today. They had one fire truck and an ambulance that was formerly a 1970s hearse. There were no malls (not even Marchwood), no large office buildings, no fast food chains, no Wawa, no grocery chains, and no pizza or Chinese food. High school students attended classes at the Uwchlan Meeting House. Lionville was a nice place to be from.

The Woman's Community Club of Uwchlan felt Lionville was a nice place to call 'home' and set the wheels in motion to purchase the Uwchlan Meeting House from the Uwchlan Grange. The building was in total disrepair when this was finalized in 1963. Never described as shrinking violets, these energetic women had varied backgrounds but were united in determination. Most were equally involved in both the Woman's Club and the Garden Class. Many served on boards of both federations and all worked tirelessly on fundraisers and projects. A four-phase renovation plan was drawn up and Phase I was completed – construction of the 'west wing', plumbing, a heating system, and a fully equipped kitchen where a porch had been. Members were also responsible for getting the building placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973. Old records tell us that the notification letter arrived just before bulldozers started work to expand Route 113 onto the meeting house grounds and the highway department packed up all their equipment and left! Realizing that the eighty members could not raise enough funds to complete all the renovations, the Uwchlan Conservation Trust (UCT) was formed and the meeting house was sold to the UCT in 1976. Phase II included restoring the original four chimneys and putting on a new roof; Phase III included removal of a Victorian porch that had been added about 1875, repointing all the exterior stonework, and restoring the facade as much as possible to its original appearance. Phase IV was the restoration of the interior of the building. Community donations, federal and charitable trust grants, and money raised by the WCCU Christmas Fair and Garden Class Plant Sale funded the last three restoration phases.

Fast forward to 2000 with the electronic revolution and every imaginable convenience. Malls, offices, groceries, drug stores, medical buildings, banks, schools, restaurants, fitness facilities, theaters – the list grows daily. The founding principles of our club have changed because of the changing demographics in ourselves as women and in the larger community of which we are a part. And yet, we are drawn together because we have similar needs – communication, understanding, learning, friendship, nurturing. We don't have to love the same things, but as we age, it's comforting to have friends to share time with, whether working with plants or doing community outreach.

The 1756 Uwchlan Meeting House stands proudly on its original site – lovingly maintained by the Uwchlan Conservation Trust and the joint efforts of the WCCU and the Garden Class. Some members think we care too much about this old building, but many of us consider it an old friend who needs our care. It has been quite a journey and we haven't reached our destination yet.