

## Laurelton State Village

by Eleanor (Hoffman) Hoy

At this time the Laurelton Center is on the minds of many people, so I thought it would be fitting to reflect on it a little.

In 1935, my parents, my brother (Forry Hoffman) and I moved into one of the farmhouses off Palman Road. My dad was hired as a farmer at the state owned complex. Laurelton State Village, as it was known at that time, later changed its name to Laurelton Center.

We lived on one of the state farms until 1940 when politics changed and my dad was afraid of being fired, so he resigned.

There was a three-story brick home with a barn, wagon shed, and nearby smokehouse. The first floor was the basement, which was concrete. Mom used it to store her home canned fruits, vegetables, and meats. I played there on rainy days. The second floor consisted of a large kitchen, living room, large walk through hall to an open stairway, and a room to the east that my mother used as a laundry room during the winter. There were folding doors between it and the kitchen, which were opened on Monday mornings to put a little heat in the room. I am not sure if there were three or four bedrooms on the third floor. There was also a large balcony that went out from the large hall on the second floor. The hall on the second floor had no heat during the winter, so I had to run through it real fast and up the open stairs on the way to the bedroom. During the time my family and I lived there, the home had no indoor plumbing.

At the back of the kitchen was a fireplace, which was probably used for cooking in earlier times. The fireplace was shut off with doors.

There was no water piped into the house, although at the northwestern end of the kitchen was a sink lined with zinc, and a drain that had no pipes connected to it. One evening we had company, and one of the boys kept going outside to the pump to get water to drink and pouring what was left in the sink. Someone noticed that the floor was getting wet. From then on we always kept a bucket under the drain.

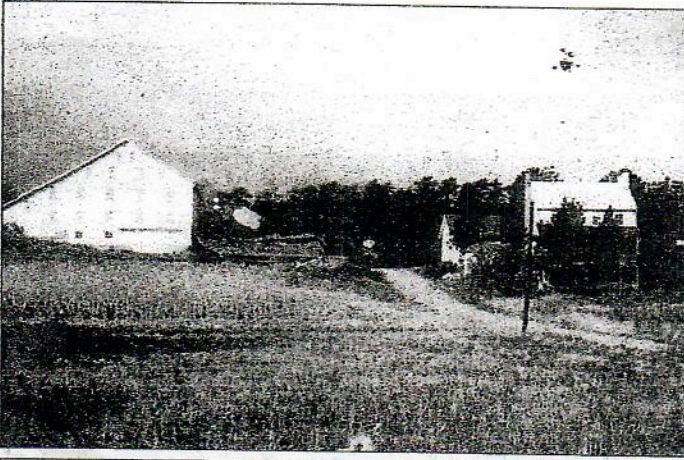
The water pump was located outside on the back porch. The pump had a roof over it and was enclosed on the west end, but open on the other three sides.

The house was heated with a kitchen stove and a heatrola in the living room. There was no

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Laurelton State Village Farm Number 2 located off Palman Road near Laurelton. While the barn remains standing, the brick home was razed a number of years ago when possession of the property was transferred to the Pennsylvania Game Commission.

heat upstairs. Many a night, during the winter, all four of us slept downstairs on a sofa that opened into a bed so daddy could keep the fire going throughout the night.

The house was wired for electricity, but the superintendent at that time would not allow the current to be turned on. We had a telephone, but all of our calls went through the switchboard at the main office on the grounds of the Laurelton State Village.

At that time there were three farms, a dairy barn with a house for the dairyman's use, a hog farm with a nearby home, and a house for the chief engineer of operations and the steward of the building on the main grounds of the Village.

The head of the farming operations at that time was J. Frank Snyder, who lived with his wife on State Village Farm Number 1. This farm was located on Ball Park Road, near the Lutheran Church and Laurel Run Cemetery. This road continued south to Palman Road and State Village Farm Number 2, the farm where my family resided.

All of these farms had large barns. When we were living on farm number 2, we were allowed to have a limited number of chickens, and two pigs. The state furnished one cow, which we

had use of the milk.

Francis Keister and his wife lived on State Village Farm Number 3, which was located off of Laurel Road, near Laurelton.

There were also two farmers who helped with the farming that did not have homes furnished for them by the state. They were William Long and Ira Gross.

During this time the farmers plowed, prepared, and planted the state farmland with horses and one caterpillar tractor. The horses were kept near the engineer's home, near the main Village. They made hay, grew wheat, oats, and corn and raised much of the food used to feed the women on the grounds plus the employees who worked on the main grounds of the Village.

At this time it was women of childbearing age who were feeble-minded. They were trainable and worked in the fields, planting and harvesting the crops they raised for their own use.

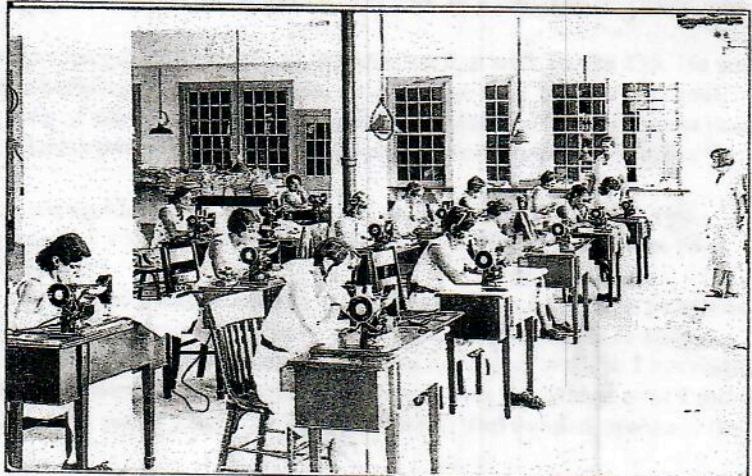
On the grounds of the Village was a large laundry building where many of these women did the washing and ironing for the other inmates (as they were called) and attendants who supervised the inmates in the different cottages. There was also a sewing department, which made all of the clothing for the inmates, as well as the uniforms for the attendants. They also had a mending department.

The kitchen attendants, with the help of the inmates, cooked all of the meals. These meals were prepared in the large kitchen and delivered to the inmates in their cottages in stainless steel containers. Meals were delivered to the cottages three times a day. The food was kept hot in large steam tables until it was time to serve the meal.

They made their own ice cream and butter from the milk they produced at the dairy farm. The dairy farm was situated alongside Route 45, just before entering the Seven Mile Narrows. There they had a herd of registered Holsteins, with each cow having its own name. The cows were milked three times a day. The inmates helped with the morning and evening milking. The dairyman had a helper who assisted with the midnight milking. We would all watch as each cow's milk had to be weighed and recorded. That always fascinated me, cows with names. Jim Wissinger was the dairyman at the time, and the barn was always as clean as it could be.

The cottage nearest to the dairy barn was called Farm Colony. The inmates who lived there helped with the barn work during the day. They also helped to tend to the chickens and turkeys that were raised for use by the institution.

The inmates were trainable in many of the departments of the Village. They had a music teacher who organized a Glee Club that also put on plays.



Girls confined to the Laurelton State Village were provided numerous training opportunities, including sewing classes.

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This snow scene shows young Eleanor Hoffman Hoy with her dog Brownie. The photograph was taken circa 1936 during time the Hoffman family resided on Laurelton State Village Farm Number 2.

lane was drifted shut many times that winter. One time the snow was packed so tight that men employed by the WPA came in to shovel us out. In order to remove the snow these men cut the snow out in blocks with a two man saw and stacked the blocks along the lane. Somewhere along the line we lost the photographs of me standing next to the blocks of snow. If there were snow ploughs in those days they were used to keep the main highways open.

My mother often told the story of the pig butchering at my grandparent's home near Hartleton. It started to snow during that day, so as soon as we could we headed for home. When we arrived at our lane it was already drifted shut. My parent's walked us kids to the house, and told us to remain there while they returned to the vehicle to get the dishes of scrapple and sausage. My mom said that the warm dishes of scrapple helped to warm her hands as she made her way from the car to the house.

Sometime in the early 1940's, my dad returned to work at the village as a truck driver, delivering meals and laundry to the cottages. He continued to work there for about six or seven years. In 1948, I went to work at the Laurelton Village as an attendant in Cottage 7. I spent the next two years working there.