

## House reflects a family's life on 40 'long acres'

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Longacre House has long been a recognizable landmark on Farmington Road just north of 10 Mile Road, and its history tells of a bygone era.

In 1968, the Luman Goodenough family donated the house, which was built in 1869, and its five acres of land to the people of Farmington to be used as a non-profit community center. Income to support the center comes from classes, special events, rentals and an annual fund drive.

The house was built by Palmer Sherman who had many fruit trees and grew alfalfa seed for the Ferris Seed Company, according to historical information provided by Denise Tawyea, the new executive director for The Longacre House.

The Sherman house was the only brick house in the area and served as a landmark.

The house consisted of a parlor, dining room and kitchen downstairs and three bedrooms upstairs. The front entrance faced Farmington Road. There was a porch across the front and the house was decorated in 19th century gingerbread style. Barns, a spring house, and a well were also part of the property.

Sherman, father of nine children, owned 100 acres but gradually sold portions to other farmers. He retired from farming in 1879 and the house and grounds were rented by others for 36 years.

In 1915, the house and property were sold to Luman Goodenough, a Detroit lawyer. Until 1918, it was used only as a summer home. The Goodenoughs hired Marcus Burrows to redesign and expand the house into a 20-room Georgian country house, including three porches, seven baths, a green house and a library.

Tawyea pointed out an upstairs porch during a tour. "This was an old sleeping porch," she said. "A lot of people in the summertime would come out on the sleeping porch, with the windows open."

Bathrooms have distinctive tile color and design. "There's pebble tile in the house," Tawyea said. "We

want to get the bathrooms beautiful again. They are just functional now."

This was the first house in the area to have electricity and a telephone. Goodenough had to erect a series of utility poles, because the necessary electric wire was about two miles away on Grand River, where there was a generating station.

The final remodeling was completed in 1930, when the library was added. With the help of neighboring farmers, the stone wall was erected along Farmington Road to replace the white picket fence.

Goodenough's formal gardens were well known in the area. Pools and fountains in the garden added beauty. Five gardeners were employed to maintain the grounds.

The Goodenoughs raised three children in this house and kept horses, sheep and goats on their 40 "Long Acres."

Several plots of ground were sold to others, including Burrows who bought acreage west of the center and built a home for himself. The architect also designed and built a house for the late Eleanor Spicer, the Goodenough's daughter. This house is northwest of the center.

Formal gardens have given way to the parking lot. An outdoor stage was erected on a pool site and an old barn was removed.

A log play house used by the Goodenough children is still there, as is the old Sherman spring house and well.

The play house has a fireplace and could make a cute honeymoon cabin, Tawyea said. "I thought with a rustic setting, if it were fixed up really cute, you could have the bride and groom spend the night there and then be served breakfast here in the morning," she said. "It would be interesting to see what the community might want to do with it."

Junipers, maples and elms planted by Goodenough still shade the lawns. The flower beds are a pleasant reminder of the days long gone when Goodenough would stroll through his beloved gardens, always looking for new ways to bring beauty to his surroundings.

The gardens tell what life was like at "Long Acres."

## New director at Longacre says welcome mat is out

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Denise Tawyea, the new executive director of the historic Longacre House, has the welcome mat out at the Farmington Road house.

"I took classes here a few years ago and I belonged to a garden club here, so I have a real affinity for the house," said Tawyea, a Farmington resident.

Her immediate goals are to organize the home and methods for efficiency, increase marketing and sales, and get the word out about possibilities.

"I don't know the whole history, but I think some of the community has felt a bit shut off from Longacre House in the past but I want to make it known that they are welcome here," Tawyea said.

**■ Among the activities planned to bring new awareness to the Longacre House is a fall Applefest, planned for Sept. 28 and 29.**

unteer. Deichert wanted more time for her business, Tawyea said.

Tawyea also has a design and display business in Farmington.

Tawyea is part of Blue Circle, a group which puts on cultural events in the Farmington area. The group this year relocated its popular Cafe on the Porch from the historic Governor Warner Mansion on Grand River in Farmington to the Longacre House. The cafe is held 7-11 p.m. Tuesdays until Sept. 24.

"It's the congeniality and the mixing of people," Tawyea said of the event, which harkens back to a time in years past when families didn't just gather around the television set. "People used to sit on the porch together."

Friendships were formed since Cafe on the Porch started last year. People bring family photos and vegetables from their gardens.

"One little boy came and brought candy last year for everyone on the

porch," she said. "The Tuesday before the Tuesday past, there was a man and woman with very small children. They were married at Longacre House seven years before during an outdoor wedding. They came to Cafe on the Porch with their babies to experience the house again."

### Building the board

Additional board members are being sought who have strengths in marketing, law, financial, events, non-profit or grant writing experience. Tawyea wants to make good decisions in running the house on a daily basis and will depend on the board to make decisions for long range plans.

At one time, the house had a membership of 1,200 people which isn't in effect anymore. "It is our intention to reinstate the membership," Tawyea said. "The community needs to know how many good people have been working here in the home."

Details about the membership and its benefits are still undetermined.

Volunteers, like Deichert, have lovingly and quietly kept the home in existence for the benefit of the community, she said. Upkeep money comes from events, classes and donations.

When the home was donated to the community years ago, the former owners asked that a membership help facilitate decision to keep the non-profit house as a social gathering place.

Among the activities planned to bring new awareness to the Longacre House is a fall Applefest, planned for Sept. 28 and 29, which will feature outdoor entertainment, food on the grill, an apple pie contest judged by local bakers and chefs, a tour of the home and historic presentations by the Quakertown Quakers.

During the Applefest, buses will both load and unload at Longacre house.

The house can also be rented for showers, weddings and funeral luncheons. It has a professional kitchen.

"It's more personal," Tawyea said. "We can give a little more sophisticated bent to it. We can lend extra special details to events. It can handle a lot of people because we have a lot of property."

For a grand wedding, tents with chandeliers, air conditioning or heating, formal dining tables and antique furniture can be brought in. "It's endless what we



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BARKER

In charge: Denise Tawyea is the new executive director of the Longacre House.

can do depending on the budget," she said.

The kitchen is run by Chef Russell, who also teaches culinary arts at a vocational school.

There's an amphitheater at the bottom of a hill which is set up for concerts and speakers. "Frequently we have a bride and groom getting married in the amphitheater, they like to have the grand walk down the hill and then they come in here for the reception," Tawyea said.

The area is contiguous with Heritage Park. During longer seminars held at the House, people can take a break and walk the grounds, she said.

The community is welcome; visitors can peruse the books in the library and check them out, she said.

"As far as I'm concerned, old homes are to be used," Tawyea said. "They don't get worn out as the rest of the public seems to think. The beauty of having an old home in the community is to use it and feel what it's like. Enjoy it for the wonderful home it is rather than hands off with it."

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