

HISTORY OF BRITTANY POINTE ESTATES

Have you ever wondered about the history of the site that Brittany Pointe Estates occupies? Probably not, but it has a varied past.

Brittany Pointe Estates is located on approximately 31 acres of ground in Upper Gwynedd in an area known at the turn of the 19th century as White's Corner. The White family ownership of the land came from the marriage of James White and Elizabeth Jones in 1790. Elizabeth inherited 115 acres from her father.

In 1848, a map shows White's Inn and Post Office on the east side of Allentown Road. A 1871 Gwynedd map shows the White Hotel and Store at the intersection of Valley Forge Road and Allentown Road. In 1881 James White sold the land to his son John James White. The son of John J. White, J. Winfield White was the founder of White's Park and was one of the Justices of Upper Gwynedd. At the turn of the century the area was known as White's Corner and is remembered today by White's Road, which is the Lansdale Borough line.

On 23 April 1915, a parcel of this property was purchased from John White by Walter Thomas Sykes, grandfather of W. Thomas Sykes, a past president of our Residents Association and the house stood at the corner where the Gulf station is now located. In the office of the gas station there is a picture of the old house. The outhouse was located where the Ambulance Company now stands. On 1 December 1919 Walter T. and his son, William A., sold the Walter T. Sykes Estate to John J. Tyler. In 1934 Morris Levin owned this property.

As early as the 1910s, Bishop Soter Ortynsky, the first bishop of all Greek Catholics in the United States, asked the Sisters Servants of Mary Immaculate (SSMI) to work among Ukrainian immigrants in the United States. They were located in Canada and in 1935 sent five sisters to minister in the Philadelphia area. Missions were established from New York to North Dakota. In 1941 a central location was purchased in Sloatsburg, N.Y. It was later named Saint Mary's Villa. It soon became a boarding school for girls, Saint Mary's Villa Academy. In 1959 the Immaculate Conception Province in the U.S. was established. The Home of Divine Providence in Chestnut Hill, PA was chosen as the Provincial Home. In 1968, Villa of Divine Providence Nursing Home of the SSMI was built on this property in Lansdale, PA. It would also house the province's first novitiate. Over the years the complexion of the province changed. The nursing home in Lansdale was sold and later the Home of Divine Providence as well. Sloatsburg, NY is the only property still owned by the sisters.

In 1978, the Villa was sold to the Holy Redeemer Health System, Inc (HRHS) which continued to operate the Villa of Divine Providence as a nursing home. On December 21, 1988 the ACTS Corporation (at that time known as Adult Community Total Services, later to become officially ACTS) purchased the property and nursing home located on

31.74 acres on Valley Forge Road. ACTS assumed the care of the Villa of Divine Providence Nursing Home patients. ACTS hired Genesis Management Company to direct the functioning of Brittany Pointe Estates. In 1996 ACTS took over full control from Genesis. Later most of the building was demolished and a new building was erected.

There are two other of the Brittany Residents that have a connection to the history of Brittany Pointe Estates. Jeff O'Malley, M.D. was Medical Director of the Villa of Devine Providence from 1970 until 1974. Charles Macy, M.D. was Medical Director at the Villa from 1979 until 1989 and then for a short time when it became Brittany Pointe Estates.

The Villa Divine Providence Nursing Home was renovated for the Brittany Pointe Estates Medical Building and construction was begun on the "Club House" as the core area was called and on Residential Building #1 (Aspen). Brittany Pointe Estates was originally proposed to be called Normandy Farms West. That was the reason for the Silo. The residents of both Normandy Farms and Normandy Farms West asked for a name change. Brittany Pointe Estates was suggested. Resident Geoffrey Dolman, husband of Kitty Dolman corresponded with officials of Brittany, France to obtain the seal, which we see on the silo. He was aided by Sue Zeager, daughter of resident, Dorothy Hartman. The County Commissioners approved use of the seal one day after Geoffrey's death in 1996. The plaque, situated at the base of the silo, was donated by resident Jane Reifsnnyder, Dorothy Hartman's sister.

Tim Godshall, Culinary, is the only present employee who was employed by the Villa of Devine Providence. ACTS employed Yvonne Renna on April 9, 1990 as a receptionist in the old Medical Building until the first Residential building was constructed. ACTS contracted Charlotte Langlais for the beauty shop in the medical building in 1990 for one day per week. She began operating full time in 1993 working between Brittany and Southhampton Estates later becoming full time at Brittany.

Brittany Pointe Estates opened the first residential building in 1994. The first residents, Ruth Essick, Emma and Ross Funk and Jan Houle, moved into Building 1 (Aspen) on 1 March 1994. The day threatened snow, but held off till the evening. Jane Reifsnnyder was the next resident. Helen Trout, Marjorie Mintz, Jean Britner, Olga Manhart, Clarence and Ruth Huling, Lillian Franklin, Kitty and Geoffrey Dolman, Marjorie Krug, Dorothy Hartman, Tony Glaser and Doris Krewson arrived during the first two months and they called themselves the "Pioneers". The Dining Room had not been completed so meals were served in one of the unoccupied apartments, later to be occupied by Ken Pierce and his wife, June. Gail Mohsenian, Life Care Consultant, and Yvonne Renna, Receptionist, also had offices in unoccupied apartments. Yvonne Renna became the Administrative Assistant to the Executive Director, later given the title of Administrative Office Manager. Tim Godshall and Yvonne Renna claim the longest employment service at Brittany Pointe.

A second Residential Building (Birch) was opened in 1997 and Building 3 (Chestnut) was opened in December 2000. The present WillowBrooke Court (WBC) and OakBridge Terrace (OBT) were also opened in 2000.

The Chapel for the Villa was used as the Brittany auditorium (presently the game room) until the present auditorium was built in 2000. The Furniture Room had been a Dining Room in the Villa and the present Craft Room was the Dementia Dining Room. The present Medical Offices and the Maintenance/Housekeeping offices were all semi private patient rooms with the Nurses station just outside what was the Dining Room (furniture room). The other 3 wings of the Villa were demolished when the new Medical building, WillowBrooke Court, was erected.

The Game room had been in what is now the Library and the Library was in the present Conference Room. The Craft Room was in the current Card Room and the Resident Work Shop was only one small room. A Residents computer and the Housekeeping Offices were located in what is now part of the expanded Resident Work Shop. The Fitness Room was located in a storage room on the 4th floor of Aspen with a minimum of equipment. When the Fitness room moved to its present location, the Residents Association used the room as its office. The Residents Association Office was later moved to the 3rd floor of Aspen so Maintenance could have access to the roof through the 4th floor room.

The present Fountain area was originally the Dining Room Lounge. The entrance into the Dining Room was through double doors in the current Fountain area. The fountain was not originally there – it was just the basin with stone frogs along the rim wall spouting water into the pool. At Christmas time the pool was drained and the tree was placed in the pool area with a train running along the outer wall. The fountain was added when Jean Oski was Executive Director.

The original Nook comprised part of the Rest Room area and cart room area. It was later enlarged across the entrance to the Dining Room when the entrance was moved to the Lounge area. The Café was much smaller with no table service and Residents had to bus their own dishes and trays. Breakfast was served in the main dining room at the area nearest to the kitchen. Residents went through the closest area of the kitchen to select their cereal, fruit and pastries (éclairs and shoo fly pie were frequently served along with the other pastries). The residents then selected a table and filled out an order form for their hot menu. These forms were collected by the wait staff and subsequently the meals were delivered to the table. The wait staff were all adults – Pat Terpeluk, Bonnie Menninger, Gloria Whitehead Mary Vandegrift and Carol Parmley. The Café was enlarged in 2000 and breakfast has been served there ever since that time. Mary Tadeo began working at Fort Washington and Gwynedd in 1993 coming to Brittany in 1996 to work in the Culinary Department in WBC and OBT, later transferring to the Residential Culinary Department.

Building 3 was originally planned to connect to the octagon area where buildings 1 and 2 meet. Instead the new auditorium and pool were inserted in that area making a break between the three buildings and reducing the “C” wing of Building 3 to only four apartments. Originally Chestnut was to have 100 apartments instead of the present 76 apartments.

In 2013 the area outside the furniture room, which had originally been a Nurses station, was renovated to make a Train Room. A group of residents have constructed a train platform and are working to make a train layout. It is open for viewing every Monday morning. There is a 3-way light switch outside of the Train Room whereby the room light may be turned on for viewing when the room is closed.

In 2014 the nook area was renovated and enlarged to house a dining area named the Riviera Room. This area is available for residents wanting to bring wine to accompany their meal. The Cart room was enlarged and the Lafayette Room is under renovation with completion scheduled for September 2014. Meals are being served in the Lounge area and the rear of the Auditorium during renovation.

As a matter of interest a list of the past administrative personnel are listed:

Executive Directors:

Bill White
Jean Oski
Carl McAloose
Larry Mabry
Steve Egles
Susan Arcadia

Administrator of Health Services

Kate Dougherty
Elmer Heiland
Eric Tatlonghari
Thomas Scarborough
Kathleen Morrell

Director of Culinary and Nutrician Services

Elmer Heiland
Mark Bond
Vince Urbano
Ronan Cunniam
Craig Redden
Erin Maher

From the above, you can appreciate the many changes that have occurred since Brittany Pointe Estates opened its doors to the Aspen building.

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