

# *Dunwoody Retrospective*



**compiled by Frederick A. Kramer**

Dunwoody Village  
3500 West Chester Pike  
Newtown Square, PA 19073

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## **A Brief Introduction**

There would be no Dunwoody Village had there not been a Dunwoody Home, and not a Home had it not been for one William Hood Dunwoody. Highly successful in the commercial world, his wealth permitted him to perform many acts of philanthropy which brought out the visionary dimension of his character.

The opening chapter of *Dunwoody Retrospective* therefore reflects on the man himself, then the thread of events moves on to the Dunwoody Home. The Home was just one of his legacies. The trustees he chose to oversee the running of the Home and their successors were also men of vision. It was they who advanced into the largely untried concept of a continuing care community. That story is told in the chapters on Dunwoody Village and its people. The focus then turns to a review of the octagonal schoolhouse which Dunwoody had attended as a child.

There's more to be told about the schoolhouse. The yarn about the path to restoration is a chapter of history unto itself. The process of placing the schoolhouse on the National Register merits a word or two. But the schoolhouse is more than a structure, it is a symbol of pride for all of Newtown Square—and there's a lot to see and be said about that.

With that scope in mind, we start our historical journey.

## **On the Covers**

[INSIDE FRONT COVER]

**A map of a portion of the 83-acre Dunwoody Village property. While not intended to be precise, positions of principal features are identified.**

[TITLE PAGE]

**Basking in the sunlight of a summer morning, the Hood Octagonal School presents itself as a monument to our history. This photograph accompanied the successful nomination of the school house as a registered National Historic Place.**

[INSIDE REAR COVER]

**A view of the Dunwoody campus as seen from outer space. This satellite view was taken in 2001. By holding the inside pages of this booklet at right angles to the cover, both the satellite picture and map can be simultaneously seen and compared.**

[REAR COVER, TOP]

**The glory of springtime visits the northern boundary of the property as seen across the front lawn. The original line of trees was lost when the West Chester Pike was widened to four lanes.**

[REAR COVER, BOTTOM LEFT]

**Autumn returns with still more color to accompany the red, white, and blue of Old Glory.**

[REAR COVER, BOTTOM RIGHT]

**Dunwoody Village's first resident was George Renninger. A banker by profession, one of his avocations was needlepoint. This original work of art greets visitors in the main lobby.**

## William Hood Dunwoody

What was there about a certain farm boy in rural Newtown Square that he should rise to become a multimillionaire? Certainly the quiet and mannerly ways of the Quaker tradition helped. He was patient, silent, and thorough. It is said that he had a sickly childhood which likely influenced the philanthropy for which he is remembered.

Obviously he inherited a business prudence and acumen rare among men of any age. By all accounts, William Hood Dunwoody was a very modest man. He received many accolades for all he did for people yet he was very shy about accepting praise of any kind. His word was his bond and that was an essential trait to have when he entered the business world.

But we are ahead of our story.

Dunwoody did considerable work on his family history. He researched in Scotland and England, and had a book printed about his findings. Unfortunately, no copies have been found.

The name Dunwoody goes back to the 13th century when it was known as Dinwithie, an Anglo-Saxon name meaning "a fortified hill surrounded by a grove of small trees or willow bushes."

The first recording of the family in America is in the early 18th century. The maternal side of the Dunwoody family emigrated from England in the latter part of the 17th century. Both families were members of the Society of Friends. Both came to Pennsylvania where they built homes.

James Dunwoody married Hanna Hood. A long line of Hoods came early to Pennsylvania with William Penn. They owned the farm for several generations until James Dunwoody bought it. When James died, it was divided among their five sons. William Hood Dunwoody later bought the interest of his four brothers, the last being Evan Dunwoody then of Colorado Springs.

William Hood Dunwoody was born in West Township, Chester County on March 14, 1841. He was their first child. At the age of seven, his parents moved to the farm of his maternal grandfather, William Hood of Newtown Square, and a few years later his father bought the farm from his fa-

ther-in-law. It had been owned by the Hoods since 1777 and thus the land on which the village stands today has been in the family since Revolutionary days.

In 1851 Dunwoody went to Philadelphia to live with an aunt where he attended public school for two years. William learned to be a broker and dealer in grain from his uncle Ezekiel. In 1864 he went into business. At twenty three he was the senior member of the flour firm of Dunwoody & Robertson.

On December 8, 1868, when he was twenty seven years old, he married Kate Lee Patten, daughter of a wealthy dealer in leather goods. She provided a strong partnership for forty seven years and became a large part in their many plans.

Not quite a year after their marriage, the couple moved to St. Anthony, Minnesota, upon the recommendation of their doctor. At the time the Midwest was regarded as a place where the air was clean and the climate healthful for many types of ailments.

The Dunwoody's found a frontier city in the growing stages. It would shortly change its name to Minneapolis. During this period, the lumber interests had just started in this section of the country and the town was considered young, raw, and inexperienced. However, the strategic location at the falls made it one of the larger business communities in the state.

After age 28, Dunwoody would spend all his life in Minneapolis. He made yearly visits to his home in Pennsylvania to see his parents. But for his love of his parents, we would have no Dunwoody Home or Village. His involvement was with Minnesota where he amassed his wealth and was revered by all.

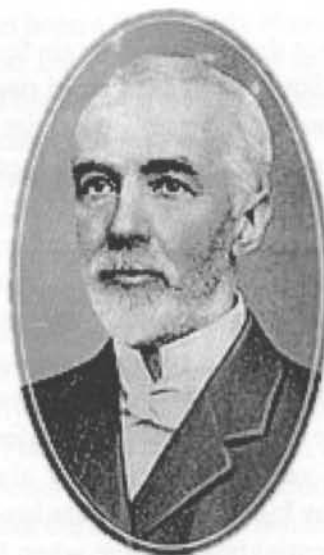
With his background, business experience and milling knowledge, Dunwoody worked independently as a commission merchant for Eastern flour interests for two years.

In 1872 he became a miller as a member of the firm of Tiffany, Dunwoody & Company. He managed two mills which were sold in 1874. In the following year Dunwoody helped organize the

Minneapolis Millers' Association, an organization which bought wheat locally throughout the growing area. It was a joint venture that saved the duplicative expense of each mill sending buyers all over looking for grain that had not yet been contracted.

In 1877 ex-Governor Cadwalder C. Washburn, having completed a large mill, encouraged Dunwoody to go to England to establish connections with foreign markets. To that time, spring wheat had never been sold abroad. Dunwoody persevered and was successful.

Dunwoody became a part owner of Washburn Crosby, a very prominent miller. The Washburns and the Crosbys were related through marriage to sisters. Their flour was produced in a brand new mill which utilized a new technique involving



**William Hood Dunwoody as he appeared in the middle of his successful business career.**



**Second only to Pillsbury, Washburn Crosby's product filled the world's flour bins.**

gradual reduction with rollers instead of millstones. The commercial product was Gold Medal flour which became a household name. It would be 1928, long after Dunwoody's death, when Washburn Crosby Company renamed itself General Mills, a vastly more comprehensible name for the world of mass marketing. After Washburn's death in 1882, Crosby ran the company with Dunwoody who remained a silent partner. Washburn's heirs inherited the mills which they would only lease, not sell, to Crosby and Dunwoody.

In 1888, for health reasons on advice of his physician, Dunwoody withdrew from active business leadership of the Washburn Crosby Company for a period of one year. It was during that time that he became an active sportsman with a keen interest in big game, fishing, mountain climbing, and the great outdoors.

His constant companions were James J. Hill, founder of the Great Northern Railroad, and Dr. A. W. Abbott, his wife's physician. Dunwoody personally arranged camping sites, guides, scheduling and travel routes which took them as far as Alaska, remote parts of Canada, and Labrador trout streams. But before his year of relaxation was over, Dunwoody was called back to guide the company through a critical financial period.

In 1899, pressure was brought to bear on Washburn Crosby Company. Efforts to form a “flour trust” were being made. The company didn’t own its mills as they were leased from a company representing the Washburn heirs. Dunwoody quietly went to Philadelphia and bought the stock, thus becoming the owner of what was formerly leased.

The *Minnesota Times* reported Dunwoody’s expense as slightly in excess of \$1 million. Upon his return to Minneapolis, Dunwoody was met by a cheering throng which presented him with a four foot diameter bouquet of 100 red roses. The paper remarked that it must have been delightful to see the modest man bearing away this gigantic tribute.

In the Minneapolis area, the Dunwoodys donated generously to expand the Northwestern Hospital and name it for Dr. Abbott who cared for Mrs. Dunwoody when she was seriously ill. They founded the Industrial College of Arts, and continue to provide aid to artists from a trust fund. William Dunwoody participated in founding the Northwest Bank. What is now the Dunwoody Col-

lege of Technology in Minneapolis was founded as a trade school and its yearly operating expense is still supported by the endowment of Mr. & Mrs. Dunwoody.

The Dunwoodys returned regularly to Newtown Square and in 1905 he used a part of his wealth to consolidate the entire Hood property by buying the subdivisions held by his brothers. Their mutual objective was to develop it into a home for convalescents as a memorial to their parents James and Hanna Dunwoody.

Upon Dunwoody’s death in 1914, the convalescent home was established to provide for those discharged from hospitals who remained weak from surgery, disease, accidents and allied disorders. They were to be cared for and strengthened to enable them to take up their occupations once again. He specified the Dunwoody Home should be a home for the needy. William Hood Dunwoody’s trust continues each year to fund the care of those in need and does so financially independent of Dunwoody Village.



The same pensive mood and pose pervade these differing images. The portrait at left is from the website of the Dunwoody Institute in Minneapolis while the oil portrait at right hangs in the lounge of Dunwoody Village. The oil painting appears to have been created from a photograph hanging at the entrance to the Care Center.

## The Dunwoody Home



*Paul Facenda*

**The Dunwoody Home in portraiture. This, the colonnaded side, faced north toward West Chester Pike.**

Although William Dunwoody died in late 1914, the home that he envisioned was not opened until 1924. His will, written a year earlier, provided \$1 million in trust, and on September 23, 1915, the Home was chartered as a nonprofit corporation. The delay in construction was necessary to let the trust fund appreciate sufficiently to afford construction of the scope intended. By early 1922, the trust had grown so that construction could begin on April 29, 1922.

Prior to the opening of the Home, the board sent a questionnaire to fifty physicians in the Philadelphia area inquiring of them the definition of convalescence and their judgement as to the type of care and length of care most in need. Through this medium it was developed that the greatest need at that time was for male patients. However, the interior design permitted later conversion for women if desired.



*Dunwoody Village archives*

**Construction draws to a close as seen on the south side whose view overlooked pasture land.**

The building was fire resistant with 9" reinforced concrete floors, all walls and partitions of masonry construction, and the four stairwells having slate steps and steel balustrades.

The kitchen was in the basement with a dumb waiter to the pantry above from which food was served in the main dining room. Two walk-in refrigerators and two food preparation and storage rooms were adjacent. An employees' dining room adjoined the kitchen. A barber room, a recreation room, a small pantry and milk bar completed the basement layout.

On the first floor there were two business offices, two small parlors, and a large living or assembly room. Off the latter was a smoking room. The main dining room stood across the hall from the living room with its adjoining pantry. There was also a staff dining room.

In a small wing extending from the west end of the building was the dispensary, the doctor's office, nursing station and a pharmacy. In a similar wing on the east end of the building was a five bed infirmary with an adjoining office for the nurse and the attendants. There was a solarium at each end of the building. Twelve private and one semi-private patient rooms completed the first floor layout.

In the center of the second floor, a large living room faced south. There were four semi-private rooms, fourteen private rooms and two private rooms with bath. Two suites served as registered nurses' quarters. There were four stairwells and a seventeen passenger Otis elevator.

The third floor was used exclusively for em-

ployees who wanted live-in accommodations. There were four semi-private rooms and fourteen private rooms and a delightful lounge in the center overlooking West Chester Pike.

Dunwoody's will was explicit in the use of the Home "where those still weak from the effects of disease, accident or surgical operation may be cared for and strengthened to enable them to again take up their daily tasks." The will went on to give preference to patients from the Orthopedic Hospital of Philadelphia and gave the board of trustees latitude in extending the benefits of the Home to other worthy or needy persons. The Orthopedic Hospital, opened about 1871, was a thriving institution at the time Dunwoody prepared his will and was ultimately combined into the University of Pennsylvania in the late 1930s.

A registered nurse was employed as superintendent in 1924 with a house physician to visit the Home routinely once a week and answer emergency calls. A farm manager was hired to continue the farm, supervise milking the cows, feeding the chickens, and tending the apple orchard and vegetable garden. Operation of the Home did not require many servants as the convalescent men were expected be up and about, making their beds, keeping their rooms tidy, serving meals cafeteria style, and otherwise being generally useful.

No stipulated financial entrance fee was required. Although there were no set fees, one dollar per day or five dollars per week or whatever one's finances would afford was expected. In many cases, the Home paid car fare from Philadelphia to the Home in Newtown Square. A fee of \$10 per week

was tried in 1925 with very mixed results. Clothing was sometimes a problem, but the Home soon had donations of used men's clothing from individuals. Local needlework guilds donated their handiwork and linens.

In 1926, booklets were printed telling the story of Dunwoody. This was for general distribution to doctors and social service agencies in the four county area, the agencies being thought of as a good place to tell what Dunwoody had to offer.

In 1927, the water pond below the boiler house was completed to supply water in case of fire. Cinder pathways were established around the pond and through the woods as walkways during convalescence. Outdoor recreation was proposed by the house physician.

Although the entire plant was practically new, problems did develop. In 1929 it cost \$6000 to replace the steam line from the boiler house, \$5400 to rebuild the roof of the main building, and \$2200 to build a cesspool. Repairs to the octagonal schoolhouse were needed but postponed due to lack of further funds.

During this period, occupational therapy was in the formative stage. Several therapists were tried but the concept did not take hold until the 1940s.

Unsurprisingly, the Depression was unkind to the Home. In one year of this period total contributions for room and board from guests amounted to \$4953 with an average daily occupancy of 39 guests. This showed many guests were contributing nothing, and those who did, contributed very little. This was a definite drain on the income from the endowment fund which was meant to support the Home. The budget called for a 20% decrease in employees' salaries, a not uncommon experience in those dark days.

Successful contacts were later made with the Herring and Supplee funds to aid needy men, yet even with this help the endowment fund had been reduced from \$890,000 to \$590,000.

However, the type of guests was changing from younger to older men and they were more sickly. In December 1941 it was noted that most referrals were coming from private physicians and by the close of the decade the census dropped to an average daily occupancy of 21 guests.

In the early 1950s the census was as low as 15 guests, the largest being 21. As income declined there was an increase in operating costs. Board members personally contacted hospital administrators to discuss how Dunwoody could serve its established purpose. In 1953, the board hired someone to contact hospitals and industrial plants about using the Home for their patients and employees needing convalescent care. Despite best effort, there was no increase in census.

A Health and Welfare Council representative visited the Home. His report stated the physical plant was in good condition, but the number of employees outnumbered the guests. It was time to consider hiring an administrator. In January of 1954, the board met with a prospective administrator and empowered him to look the situation over, report his findings, and develop a plan for future operation.

The outcome was a plan for the admittance of elderly men on a long term basis and at a going rate of cost which was then \$7.50 per day. However, the board kept in mind the case of a worthy indigent unable to pay the going rate of \$40 per week for a bed in a semi-private room. The candidate was employed as administrator in March 1954 and was active until his voluntary retirement in 1971.

In 1954 the farm manager was authorized to dispose of the herd of cattle since this phase of the operation was not carrying its expense.

Back in April of 1953, the local school board advised that it was considering condemning 22 acres of Dunwoody land fronting on Media Line Road and made a tentative offer of \$58,500. The school board was notified the Home was not interested in disposing of that land. Eighteen months later the Joint School Authority signified its intention of condemning 22 acres of Dunwoody property to erect a high school building. The trustees agreed to transfer the 22 acres for \$84,600.

In January 1955 the widening of West Chester Pike, a plan that had been around since 1928, had finally come to fruition. About 1500 feet of frontage was affected and damages awarded to The Dunwoody Home amounted to \$46,000.

In November, 1956, water supply from springs on the property showed an abnormal bacteria count.



The water supply was immediately chlorinated and consideration was given to using water from a deep well or from Philadelphia Suburban Water Company. The make-or-buy decision went to the water company with the cost of \$6000 for a water line from West Chester Pike to the main building

A new local ordinance mandated all property owners to install sidewalks. In October of 1957 the Dunwoody sidewalk was completed at a cost of \$2400. In the following June the steam line from the boiler house was again replaced, a \$4000 expense.

The American Stomach Hospital in Philadelphia and other doctors who were interested in locating a non-profit community hospital in the Newtown Square area inquired about building on a 25 acre tract at the east end of the property. It was agreeable and a binder of \$10,000 was placed in escrow. However, the sponsors of the new hospital could not secure Hill-Burton money for the project, whereupon they proposed that the hospital be privately owned and operated by the doctors for profit. This was not in agreement with the original concept and the board rejected the project. Also, the Marple-Newtown School Authority wanted additional land adjoining the 22 acres previously obtained for an athletic field. This would encroach on the twenty-five acres planned for the hospital. Therefore the hospital project was dropped and the money refunded to the association involved.

In the early part of the year 1959 the Board of Trustees discussed expansion plans in view of a disappointing occupancy rate. An expansion plan was proposed that was similar to that of Rosemont Presbyterian Village, namely cottage type accommodations on the grounds. Zoning and related township restrictions were discussed. Richard Yarnall, architect on the board, was asked to make a further study of the subject.

On April 18, 1962, the board was notified by the executor of the estate of Harry R. W. Rahn of a legacy to Dunwoody Home. Mr. Rahn's bequest was \$5,000 to be used for whatever purpose needed. A month later, architect Yarnall was instructed to proceed in using this found money to rehabilitate the old octagonal school house.

In 1962, the administrator proposed a six bed infirmary to take care of men not ill enough to be

hospitalized but who needed more than watchful care. It would use first floor space which was the recreation room which in turn would be relocated in the basement where an occupation therapy room had been.

Dr. Joseph E. Sands, who had been at the Home as house physician since its opening, retired. His assistant Edward A. Theurkauf, M. D. became the new house physician June 11, 1963.

When the town installed a new sewer line, assessments for the Home were reduced because it crossed Dunwoody property. Final cost to the Home would amount to only \$3,000 but it then cost \$10,500 to connect the main building and the three tenant houses to the new line.

In 1965, Board members inspected wall-to-wall carpet in the guest dining room. This installation was the first carpeting in the Home. It replaced the original heavy linoleum. Some men who were unsteady on their feet had fallen despite a non-skid compound used on the linoleum. Hallways and rooms would not get carpeting until 1968.

Going into the 1970s, upgrading of the physical plant continued. The original laundry equip-



The official seal of the Dunwoody Home featured an image of the Octagonal School, calling it an old landmark. However, in so doing it reinforced the myth that the structure was built in 1798.

ment was still in use but it was so erratic that it couldn't be operated by a member of the house-keeping staff. It required a maintenance man to run it! Rented linen laundered by the rental company was considerably cheaper and Jenkins Linen Service got the job.

The boiler plant was in no better shape. Two coal fired boilers installed when the Home was opened were fired by hand with ash removal also done by hand labor. This required 2½ employees per day to operate the steam plant. This was rectified with installation of two oil fired boilers supplied from an 8,000 gallon tank.

At this point it is well to point out that plans for Dunwoody Village as an adjunct to the Home had already been put in place and were being acted upon. That story parallels the remaining account of the Home and is unfolded in the next chapter.

In 1974 there were 39 residents in the Home which had a capacity of 42. Rates had risen to \$75 a week for a semi-private room. State aid which started in 1954 was then \$150 a month for an indigent, an amount that the Home accepted in such cases. There were four residents receiving aid at that point in time. In 1979, a downstairs wing was converted into quarters for elderly women.

While Dunwoody's trust fund could support charitable acts, it did so at a deficit. It became increasingly clear that with only six rooms having baths, no air conditioning at all, insufficient wiring for modern appliances, and a marginal ventilating system that something had to be done.

As the 1990s opened, the scope of improvements necessary was estimated to cost \$2.5 million. It would have required a mortgage that would have left no funds in the endowment to support charitable activities. There was an idea advanced to convert the building into commercial office space, but an abundance of surplus office space in Philadelphia at the time doomed the idea as being too risky.

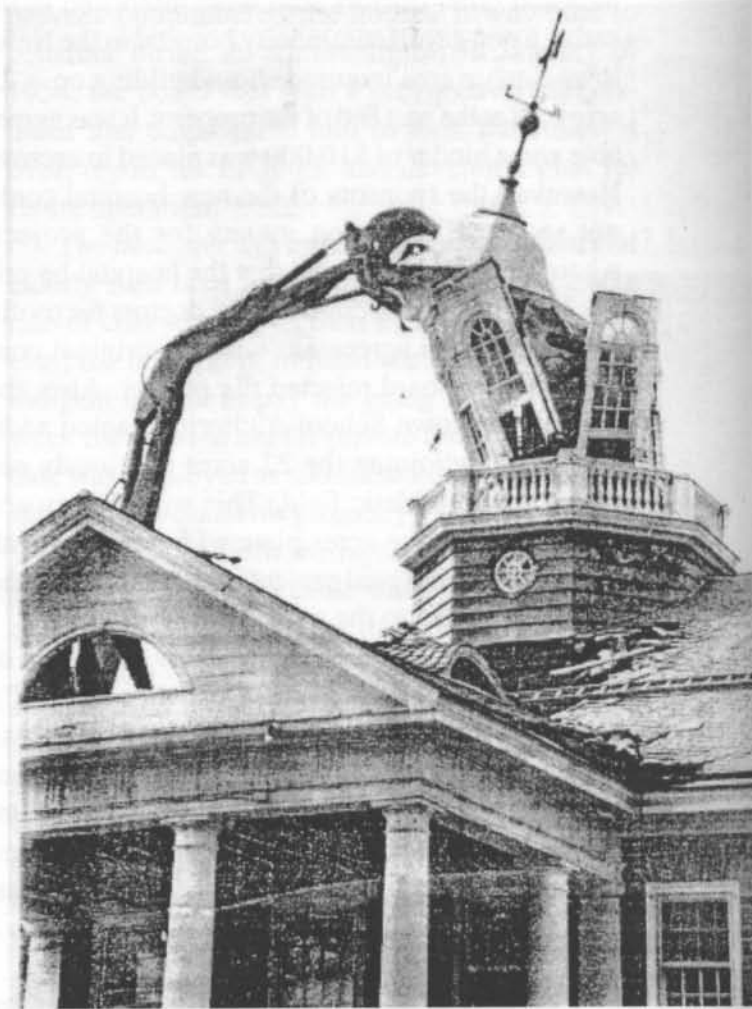
So the fate of the grand old structure was sealed. Income from the trust fund could fully support ten residents in assisted living. Seniority and need determined which residents were given the option of being temporarily relocated during demolition and construction as the Village expanded its facilities.

The remaining residents found other housing.

Some furnishings were salvaged for use in the Village. A Dunwoody employee purchased the two end porches for her home. Others considered buying the white pillars and iron railings.

It was at 10:30 in the morning of Friday, May 29, 1992 that the claw of the wrecker reached up to demolish the distinctive cupola. Few knew that inside that charming ornament was the water tank that had supplied the building.

The landmark had fallen.



Pat Nyce for the County Press

**In captioning a different photograph of the demolition, the Marple/Newtown edition of the *News of Delaware County* expressed the hope that at least the cupola would be preserved for some future use such as a garden ornament. The *County Press* showed what really happened.**

## Dunwoody Village



*Dennis Degnan*

The bright sunshine of a mid-2006 morning illuminates Dunwoody Village in all its glory. The camera looks south from over West Chester Pike. The Cedars section occupies the left center of the photograph. East Village is seen from CH-109 at the extreme left edge, then across the copse of trees along Hunter Run, the south lawn, the West Village, and a sweeping view of the apartment complex ends with the new units and port cochere at the oval. The Hood Octagonal School is unseen off the left edge of the picture.

Imagine yourself in the years just prior to 1970 as a member of the Board of Trustees overseeing the Dunwoody Home. Could any of us envision the transition from an outdated, underutilized, failing operation to this state-of-the-art continuing care community?

It happened in stages of course, but the overarching wonder is that it happened at all. The concept which is so easily recognized and accepted today was barely heard of and there were few working examples to learn from. It took courage as well as foresight to make this transition.

The propelling force was the transformation of recuperative care that was taking place before their very eyes. Visiting nurse programs, hospital outpatient, homes having infirmary care, and the new kid on the block, retirement villages, had entered the scene. With declining occupancy, the Dunwoody Home was too small to be economically efficient.

The first concrete actions occurred in 1968 when W. H. Dunwoody Zook appointed himself, S. Forde Hansell, and Richard Yarnall to explore an expansion program. By late 1969, a tentative plan for cottage expansion west and south of the

Home had been drawn up. The concept was discussed with the Mission Committee of the Church of the Redeemer in Bryn Mawr. They were enthusiastic about the idea as a retirement option for their parishioners. Reverend Timothy Pickering and a board member made a fact-finding visit to Foulkways at Gwynedd, then a two-year old village.

The next fact-finding came from the Hospital Survey Committee of the Health & Welfare Council of Philadelphia. In its view, there was an unmet need for retirement villages, the modern counterpart of homes for the aged. They went on to recommend development of a business plan before further architectural planning.

The law firm of Pepper, Hamilton and Sheets was retained to test the legality of the venture. Any plan of this scope and direction would require approval of the Orphans' Court. A decision was handed down October 17, 1972.

The Home would continue to operate as an intermediate care facility and also be allowed to construct and operate a retirement village on its land. But there was a proviso that no person once admitted to the village would be obliged to leave for financial reasons. It also directed that income from Dunwoody's trust could only be used for operating and maintaining the Home. Thus the Home and the Village had separate accounting systems and, while a mortgage covering the entire property would finance the project, the Village alone would pay the interest and amortization.

In 1972 negotiations with Newtown Township, the directors agreed to pay a nominal property tax even though the Village would be non-profit. The town supervisors supported that plan in exchange for an annual donation to the fire department.

Two notable Dunwoody Village features were the result of comments made by residents of the



*Dunwoody archives*

The advanced stage of construction dates this photograph to the late spring of 1974.

few other continuing care facilities then existing. One was the need for larger rooms and the other was to make possible the ability to pass from one to any other part of the complex without being exposed to the weather or chill. These would be lasting benefits, and only the decision to provide a substantial number of studio apartments would haunt the imaginative and gracious buildings that conformed so nicely with the landscape. Leave it to the local newspaper to grouse about the development as obliterating the view of the old cow pasture as seen from the Home.

Reverend Pickering recalls how the members of the board beat the bushes for residents in the still sight unseen Village. They were quite successful and occupancy began in mid-September of 1974. The first resident was George Renninger, a retired senior vice president of Fidelity bank. He held a New Year's Eve party for the 75 residents who had moved in by year end. It was a personal tradition that Renninger would sponsor for many years.

On the Village's first anniversary, there were 215 occupied units serving 222 women and 64 men. There were 47 couples and, interestingly, nine pairs of sisters. Dunwoody Village had successfully launched and as the *Philadelphia Inquirer* put it, "It's the Barclay of Newtown Square."



Dunwoody Library

In a good humored pose for the camera, John Parry, head of the new Residents' Association at the far right, hands a key to George Renninger that symbolized his status as Resident #1. Looking on are trustees Richard Yarnall, relaxed at far left, and Dunwoody Zook.



Dunwoody Library

September 11 was a notable date of the 1977 calendar. It was then that the Memorial Garden was dedicated. Seen at left is the Reverend Timothy Pickering. He was a trustee at the time and participated in the ceremony which featured organ music.

Initially and for some years, food service was provided by Stouffers. The Dundale nursing wing became operational at the end of March, 1975. Work continued to supplement it in 1978 with Dundale East, a two-floor building destined for later conversion to the assisted living units of Woodlea and Leeland. The east end entrance was designated Medical East, a term that survives to this day.

Major events took place in 1986. The Zook Pavilion was opened with more spacious rooms for residents requiring long-term skilled nursing care. Built at a right angle to Dundale, it shared the head nursing station at the Medical West entrance. An indoor pool was installed below the Pavilion side of the L-shaped facility. Residents on the upper floor of Dundate East were moved to Pavillion and



Dunwoody Library

The Home's cupola looms Dundale East as the project completes in 1975. By 1993, the buildings would house Leeland on the first floor and Woodlea on the second.

the floor was converted to Woodlea for assisted living. The other major expansion in 1986 was the addition of thirty country houses which form today's East Village. They too were connected to the Community Building by a covered, heated hallway.

In the year 1993, the Hood Building completed a full square at the skilled nursing level. Of the new sides of the square named Patten, one accommodated a floor above which was designated Fairlee. This permitted moving the last of the Dundale East nursing residents into Patten and converting Leeland to assisted living.

A new entryway protected by traffic lights at Bryn Mawr Avenue was opened in 1992. This replaced the long driveway starting near the octagonal school house. Ten years later, forty assisted living units, twenty of which were designed for the memory-impaired, would be built where the Home once stood. This expansion was named The Cedars.

The financial markets shortly after the turn of the 21st century presented an unusual opportunity.

It became possible to replace some high interest bonded debt with a lower interest issue, undertake substantial improvements and have 12 additional fully modern apartments, all without any negative financial impact.

In addition to the 12 apartments, the plan produced a new entrance with a port-cochere, a new gift shop, marketing office, transportation office, card room, and spacious meeting room. Occupancy began in the summer of 2005.

A century ago, people spoke of the Masonic Home, the Methodist Home, or generically, the Old Folks Home, as the place where retirees ended their days. In the 1950s, federal legislation subsidized anyone who would erect a nursing home. That set off a boom that produced thousands of them. With that came requirements and guidelines in the 1960s.

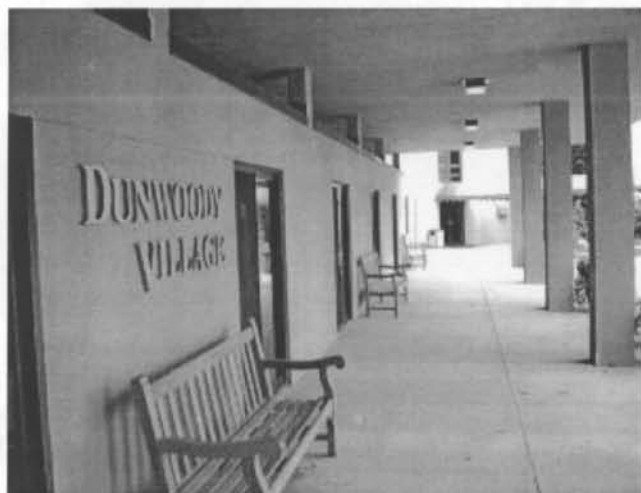
Today there are approximately 1000 long term care facilities in the United States with organizations to provide standards and accreditation. Dunwoody is an accredited member of all the major groups.



*Fred Kramer*



*Nancy Morrison*



*Both, Fred Kramer*

With a low profile, the original entrance to the Village was open to the weather. Looking down the outside walkway, Door A can be seen protected only by a canopy. The interior walkway connecting the Community Building with the apartments had windows on both sides. This view looks from the old triangle toward the lobby. During construction, connection was made through the tunnel beneath.



## The Dunwoody Village Residents' Association

Every resident of Dunwoody Village is a member of the Residents' Association. This includes those who are in assisted living and skilled nursing. The mission of the association is twofold: first it marshals and coordinates the volunteer activities needed to maintain a stimulating life style and secondly, it assists Dunwoody management by collectively reflecting residents' preferences and suggesting courses of action to be taken.

As construction was being completed at the outset of 1975, the resident population had built up to over 100 and would go on to reach 300 by the end of the year. The driving force in setting up a Residents' Association was John Parry. By dint of persuasion and leadership he welded together a pro tem organization which he then headed. After several efforts, a satisfactory set of bylaws were created and used to form the permanent organization.

John Parry went on to become the first president. He did not run for reelection, nor did his successors until 1991 when the first of a number of second term presidents would be elected.



*Courtesy of Ed Pizzi*

**A plaque board of past presidents of the Residents' Association hangs in the lobby**

Unfortunately, few records remain of the early days of the association. We do know that many of today's committees have been in existence since the beginning of the Association. The only original committees which passed out of existence were the United Fund and Transportation Committees and they did so during the early years.

The history of the Memorial Garden Committee is most interesting. It was formed as the Garden and Grounds Committee in the late winter of 1975. It was originally an advisory and liaison committee between the management and the Residents' Association. Plans for residents' new gardens were first submitted to the committee for advice and approval and then sent to the management and trustees for final decision.

In the summer of 1975 the committee had the idea of developing a community garden to be used by the residents, especially for those in the Medical Center. This entailed a space large enough to build an adequate terrace for wheel chairs.

At that time the area now occupied by the garden was being discussed by the trustees as a possible parking lot. Through fortunate timing and persuasive lobbying by the committee, permission was granted by the trustees to use the space for a garden. In order to maintain tax deductibility, funds would be handled through the Home.

To raise the money to bring the plan into being, the committee ran a Country House and Apartment Tour in the spring of 1976. That brought in \$600 and a garage sale the following fall netted \$1,000. Another \$1,500 was realized by selling over 300 windowsill baffles. These activities laid the initial nest egg.

Originally there was no planting in the garden other than the holly hedge against the auditorium wall and a euonymus by the Medical Center. A gazebo was designed by a resident and constructed by Bob Melligan, an employee of the Home. Bob also made the garden benches. A flagstone walk was laid leading from the garden to the center circle. This had been suggested by architect Henry Mirick.



*Nancy Morrison*

**The old home-built gazebo was replaced in 2004.**

The Memorial Garden Committee received permission to restore an old greenhouse on the property which was then renovated. Six hundred annuals were grown yearly to plant in the garden and around the Home grounds.

As the years went by and even though the committee was enlarged, it was no longer able to do the hard work. Two knowledgeable young girls were employed once a week.

The garden and its funds have always been separate from the Residents' Association and the Memorial Garden has never received funds from them except for \$500 which was voted as a gift by them to help pay for the \$2,000 flagstone path. Except for offerings at the Ash Wednesday and Annual Memorial Services, most contributions have been given as memorials for individuals.

All the trees in the Garden have been given as memorials including dogwood trees given by the trustees in memory of W. H. Dunwoody Zook. In 1981 the committee planted a large copper beech and a red maple to replace two dead Dutch elms beside the steps between the garden and the Home. They also planted two unusual *Franklinia* trees.

Fearful that the Garden might become a forest, in 1984 the Memorial Garden Committee decided not to accept any more trees or large shrubs as memorials, but to use future gifts solely toward maintenance and the annual planting of flowers. That year the committee installed a sprinkler system covering the entire area of the Memorial Garden.

In 1985, an unusual request was made for a special memorial. This was for one of the first resi-

dents at Dunwoody who had been a constant financial supporter of the Garden since it was started. It was to honor a young man who cared for the donor and his wife over the years.

Having voted that there should be no more major planting in the garden the committee decided that this was an exceptional case and suggested the idea of replanting the triangle inside Door 1. A design was drawn with a pool and spouting lead fish. This appealed to everyone, however a firm decision was then made that all future funds would go solely to the general maintenance of the garden.

Overall, the committees with the largest membership have traditionally been those which assist in the operation of the gift shop, the library committee, and the hospitality committee which welcomes new residents. However, the Model Railroad Committee has its own historical legacy to retell. One of Dunwoody's attractions is its model railroad display. It is the product of the Howard brothers, particularly Charles Howard who developed a passion for building and operating models.

In 1974, Charles and his widowed mother moved into Dunwoody from their home in Haverford. Additionally, they rented an existing basement room to re-create the alpine ski village he brought with him. The layout arrived all packed in boxes.

As a result of a disability, Charles Howard required the devoted and enthusiastic assistance of his older brother Willing to re-construct the layout. Although never a Dunwoody resident, Willing was a talented, professional artist, and skilled craftsman.

At Dunwoody Village the Howard brothers worked on their train layout in privacy. The observation window was not built until Dunwoody acquired the trains in 1998. Only a few outsiders had access to the train room and they were usually craftsmen hired to help with construction and the complex electrical systems. Everything in the train room and adjacent shop room belonged to the Howards, and they kept it all to themselves.

The large surrounding mural was an original work of Willing Howard whose career was as a professional artist. Some of his sketches are on permanent display today at the Gulph Mills Golf Club where he was a member. The mural alone was once considered insurable for \$18,000.



In 1991 after 17 years of work, the installation was not quite complete, yet work stopped because of Willing's declining health. Charles was not capable alone of completing the installation. His own poor health required his move to the Care Center in 1995 where he died in 1998.

So the trains lay idle, unattended, and mostly forgotten during those seven years until 1998 when the Howard estate made a charitable bequest to Dunwoody Village.

This acquisition was the result of a great interest and activism of Nye Spencer, a retired electrical sales engineer. The Spencers had moved to Dunwoody in 1993. He became aware of the existence of the trains and enthusiastically sought to preserve them.

Nye encouraged and assisted Dunwoody management in negotiating the acquisition of the entire display and its equipment. He did so even though he had not been given free access to them until the gift to Dunwoody was finalized.

Nye formed a Residents' Association committee to revitalize the installation. In April 1999, nine months later, the trains were ready for a grand opening ceremony. Dunwoody management had taken out a wall so an observation deck and window could be installed.



Fred Kramer

A steam train and an electric engine pass the amusement park Ferris wheel, a childrens' favorite. The background mural lends perspective and color.

The display, consisting of five separate operating sections, has been technically improved and an innovative audio system has been installed. Landscaping has been refurbished and enhanced. The operating roster now includes 25 working engines with appropriate rolling stock.

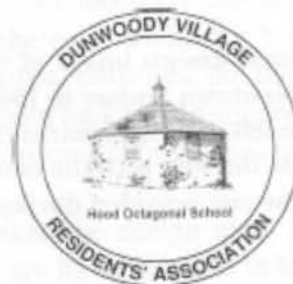
Historically, our newsletter had a little side step. In order to have a means for disseminating news and developments at the very outset of occupancy, the management threw together a newsletter called *The Comet* to herald progress. It lasted no more than a dozen issues before there were enough residents to produce the real McCoy on which they bestowed the elegant name of *Inside Dunwoody*.

In the early years, an editor had a term of just one year. The paper has since had co-editors, the most remarkable being Bill Elmore who reigned over 91 issues. Over the years, one of the paper's most endearing features has been its presentation of original poetry created by residents.

The Dunwoody Residents' Association is a member of a council made up of continuing care communities like ours. Most, but not all, are non-profit. The council meets quarterly to discuss common problems and share experiences.

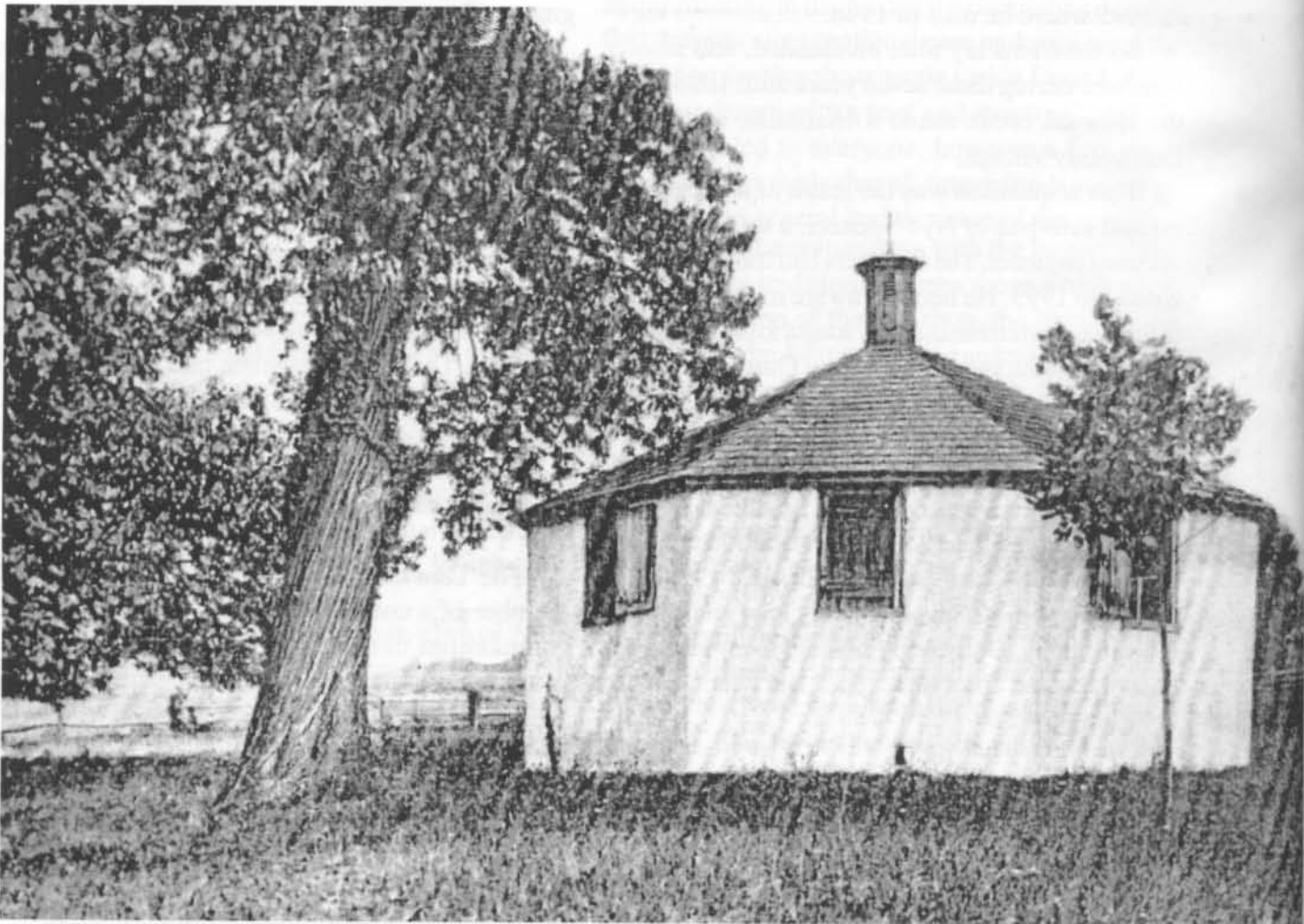


## Dunwoody Village Residents' Association



The two logos of the Association are seen here. The original one, above, noted the schoolhouse as a 1798 landmark, although the graphic labeled Old Land Mark came from the seal of the Home and the masthead of *The Comet*. The modern one, below, dates from 2003.

## The Hood Octagonal School



*The Philadelphia Record*

**This is the oldest known image of the Hood Octagonal School. It is copied from a postcard that was mailed from Newtown Square in 1906. The camera directly addresses the west face of the building. The fence line seen left and right marks the property line with the Fawkes farm. Unluckily, the camera angle did not include the side with the entrance door as originally constructed. The original cupola seen here differs from the one provided during restoration in 1963-1964.**

The Hood Octagonal School is notable as a physical structure due to its age which dates back to the mid-19th century, the care that has led to its remarkably good condition today, the significance of this type of building in connection with post-colonial education, and, of course, the curiosity of being an eight-sided building.

Relevant background information extends back to a schoolhouse in Newtown Square as early as 1750. Constructed of logs, it was maintenance-prone and ultimately became so dilapidated that it was torn down in 1815. In the meantime, the Hood, Hunter, and Fawkes families living on the east side of town sought to improve conditions for themselves. It was on the 25th of March, 1794, when a "testament" was made and concluded between Joseph Hood "of the Township of Newtown, county of Delaware, in the state of Pennsylvania: and Edward Hunter, and Richard Fawkes, each of the same place, for the purpose of erecting a school house for the benefit of their neighbors adjacent."

They erected their modest, log schoolhouse on the property of Jonathan Hood. Hill's map of 1810 indicates that a school existed on the Hood property east of the Street Road and West Chester Pike intersection. Although the precise location is not shown, it is clearly east of the intersection but not as far east as the stone octagonal school was later placed.

In addition to being indicated on the 1810 map, this school was in operation in 1820 because one of the Hunter children is known to have attended it. Attendance was by subscription since legislation establishing public school districts was not adopted until 1834. Looking ahead momentarily to 1884, this early log school house was not only dismantled but no trace of it remained.

With the coming in 1834 of the statewide basis for forming school districts, Newtown Square acted promptly. It had an active school board whose directors acquired one lot of ground on the west side of town in 1836 on which an octagonal stone school house was built. In 1839 another stone schoolhouse was built on the north side of town.

By 1840 plans were made by the directors of the school district to build a similar octagonal stone structure on the east side of town then being served by the log structure on Hood's property. On Janu-

ary 11, 1841, Isaiah Fawkes transferred .44 acres of land to the directors for one dollar. There was a stipulation that when the use of the land for school purposes was ended, the land would revert to the Fawkes family.

The building became the third and final stone octagonal school house built in Newtown Square. It replaced the Hood School built of logs and would serve as a one-room schoolhouse for a quarter century. Unlike its stone counterparts throughout town, the Hood school house was not torn down as the land was to revert to the Fawkes.

The Hood school house sits on a knoll which has remained in the Hood and, through marriage, the Dunwoody families for over 200 years. The site overlooks what was an unimproved wagon road at the time the school was built. The road was upgraded and became a toll road in November of 1852. In 1895 the turnpike was bought by a railway company which laid its tracks adjacent to the road. Ultimately, West Chester Pike was modernized to a four-lane highway in 1956. Thus this siting was always prominent and highly accessible in Newtown Square.

Built of fieldstone and octagonal in shape, its simple, organic lines and overall absence of Victorian architectural embellishments testify to the building's early origin. There are seven windows on as many sides placed high above the level of the children's heads. The one and only entrance door is on the eighth side.

The immediate and striking feature of this schoolhouse is its nonconventional shape. The design is not inherently useful for homes, commercial and industrial purposes, but the concept of an eight-sided room took root in connection with constructing one-room schoolhouses in post-colonial America.

What makes the design ideal as a one-room schoolhouse are its advantages in heating, natural lighting, and ventilation. Winter use of a schoolhouse requires an adequate source of heat and this was provided by a stove rather than one or more fireplaces. Cold weather also underscored the value of constructing the building with more substantial materials than a wood frame. Since it was desirable to minimize the length of exposed walls and expensive masonry for a single room, it would be

theoretically best to minimize the wall-to-area ratio by building a circular school house. But building with straight segments was a far more practical matter, and therefore an economic matter. An octagonal shape closely exceeds by only 9% the theoretical minimum amount of wall needed to enclose the classroom, and it does so without introducing the complexity of circular construction.

So attractive was the idea of an octagonal shape for a schoolhouse that the plan was adopted over a fairly wide area. More than 100 schools were built to this design in the Delaware Valley, embracing Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware. Two examples still exist within two dozen miles of Newtown Square, but neither is located within Delaware County.

The octagonal design was in vogue in northern New Jersey throughout the latter part of the eighteenth and very early part of the nineteenth century. The last traces of most of them appear to have been lost around 1860, although some examples survived as tool sheds or are modified for residency. Interestingly, just as the period in which the Hood Octagonal School house was built, a wave of octagonal schoolhouse construction began with the design appearing on Long Island, in upstate New York, Maryland, Ohio, Illinois, and Wisconsin.

A six-inch wide eave protects the stone walls and terminates the eight roof segments of cedar shakes. Atop the schoolhouse is a tower or cupola through which the gasses from a stove centered directly beneath it could be vented to the atmosphere. It is currently a louvered protective design which lends a pleasing architectural feature.

At present, the construction uses a more generous application of mortar than uncut fieldstone would normally require. While not original as seen in the 1906 postcard view at the beginning of this chapter, this may be a result of a maintenance improvement. Masonry pointing tends to break out as a result of freeze and thaw, and a heavy application may avoid that problem.

A glance at the interior side walls reveals the utter impracticality of heating by means of one or more open fireplaces. As was typical, the floor was made of heavy wooden planks at grade level, there being no basement. Wooden pegs near the door held hats and coats. In the absence of blackboards, les-

son material hung from wooden posting rails.

Of special interest to visitors is the common water bucket and, on a humorous note, a dunce cap rests on a stool in the corner.

The property associated with the Hood Octagonal School lies at the northeast corner of the Dunwoody property which in its entirety currently extends over 83 acres. This is the property recognized as a national historic place. The corner itself is marked by a surveyor's monument. The parcel is in the shape of a parallelogram bounded by the pike, the farm house lane, a line parallel to the northern boundary, and the eastern boundary of Dunwoody property. The tract closely approximates the land donated by Isaiah Fawkes in 1841. The school house is set back about 95 feet from the northern boundary.

The educational significance of the Hood Octagonal School is interesting, as it was built to serve educational needs in the post-colonial period prior to the War Between the States. From a legislative standpoint in 1841, the requirement for universal education was already established, but an overall, highly organized means for accomplishing this was just taking shape. Thus, the Hood school house fits into the transitional period between education at home or by subscription with neighbors and the form of classroom education as we know it today in public and private schools.

Pennsylvania's first school was established in 1683, a seminal year in that leaders in the colony enacted a law requiring all children to be taught to read and write. In a narrow sense, that act encouraged, in fact insisted, that parents assure a degree of literacy. At that time, the accepted standard of literacy was the ability to sign one's name. Home schooling was quite acceptable if the desired results could be attained.

However, the sense of the act was broader in scope. This law signaled the end of the period in which determining educational goals had been left to individual families. It was no longer a parental matter of whether or not a child should be educated and to what minimum degree.

That seventeenth century mandate for universal instruction at this most basic level set in motion several formal means for providing educational opportunity. By the end of the eighteenth century,



A close view of one of the sides, each of which had a window for natural light. Window placement at a height of four feet eleven inches prevented students from being distracted by outside activities. The window has a board-and-batten shutter shown in the closed position. The field stone opening is seven inches wider than the shutter itself, the difference consisting of side jambs. The strap hinges are sixteen inches in length. Window headers extend upward to reach the wooden beams which form the sill for the roof, a construction method which avoided the need for a cap stone.

education in the form of church schools which were largely Quaker, charter schools such as Penn Charter, and subscription schools had emerged. During that period, the course of events had led from colony status to a commonwealth state in a new republic.

The move away from home schooling required funding. A general salary figure for a school teacher was \$750 with room and board provided by students' parents in the local community. School houses were maintained by subscription. For schools on Quaker meetinghouse properties, the administration was done by the meeting and typically the meeting would contribute to the tuition for those parents who could not afford to pay the full amount. A 1790 amendment to Pennsylvania's constitution included a provision for free school-



The school was heated by a stove placed in the middle of the room which exhausted through an aperture in the center of the somewhat domed ceiling. The stove's flue pipe passed upward into a cupola. However, at some point the stovepipe exhaust was routed through a porthole in one of the shutters.

ing for the poor but, as implemented in an act of 1809, parents would have to declare themselves paupers to avail themselves of a government-paid tuition.

As the post-colonial years began to unfold, education in the rural area of Newtown Square required construction of a one-room schoolhouse to satisfy a growing population. This was consistent with the common means for carrying out the education mission, a solution that proved so practical that it survived in many areas until the appearance of reliable bus service to consolidated schools.

During the long tenure of the one-room schoolhouse, educational shortcomings were regularly noted. Often the teachers were ill-prepared, having only a limited background and just a district school education themselves. The educational cli-

mate was difficult to maintain because discipline broke down easily due to the disparity of student ages and interests. Severe punishment for unruly behavior was not unusual as teachers acted in *loco parentis*.

Exposure to the academic-learning process was extremely short in terms of today's standards. School sessions were limited to those winter months after harvest when child labor wasn't needed on the farm although, in some districts, late spring sessions kept the youngest ones out from underfoot during planting season.

Teaching methods included responsive read-

ings taught by rote. The teacher read questions from a book and the students responded with memorized answers.

The material covered factual matter as well as adages and maxims. In arithmetic, questions often involved making change from a dollar. Other arithmetic problems involved weights and measures not common today, such as hogsheads, gills, and pecks, to name a few examples. One-room schools such as the Hood Octagonal School had an advantage in that older children could help the youngest in learning the alphabet.



*Fred Gerkenmeyer*

**The schoolmaster's desk faced the younger children grouped around the stove. Older children faced shelf-like desks attached to the walls, an upper shelf tilted for writing with a horizontal shelf underneath to hold the pupils' slates.**

## Restoring the Hood Octagonal School

The text used to nominate the Hood Octagonal School as an historic place was nearly silent on the matter of the interim use for storing farm equipment. Without source material from six to eight decades earlier, the nomination focused on what was original and had only this to say about the intervening period between use as a schoolhouse and a restored site:

*In November, 1963, restoration of the Hood School was made possible by a bequest from a one-time resident at the Dunwoody Home. The work was completed in 1964. At some period during the years after serving as a schoolhouse and before its restoration, the building served*

*to store farm implements and equipment. The doorway may have been widened to improve access, but if so, restoration has removed any evidence of any such temporary alteration.*

These statements are quite true, but unknowingly, there was much more to the story than that—and it turns out to be quite a yarn.

Just months after the nomination process had moved on to a successful conclusion, the unexpected happened. A trove of forgotten memorabilia related to Dunwoody history was unearthed deep in the administrative section of the dead storage room. The mix in that forgotten box contained source material for this chapter.



*Philadelphia Inquirer*

It's the summer of 1946. Two young ladies pick flowers or berries from the growth in front of the gaping entrance to the old school house. This is the earliest known picture of what had been done in the way of "widening" the door. The photo shows a modified cupola arrangement. The accompanying article spoke of consideration being given to restoring the building.

The earliest mention of the school house's physical condition available to us today dates from just prior to the Depression. At the time, the structure was approaching 90 years of age, the last 60 of which had been standing idle. It was said to need repairs for which there was no money available.

Indeed there were no funds available during the Depression either and no ability to adequately maintain the structure during World War II. The article accompanying the newspaper photograph on the preceding page spoke of consideration being given to restoring the building. That postwar remark reveals that the objective on the part of the Dunwoody Home had moved from one of repair to one of restoration.

In the summer of 1954, the Home broached the subject of the school house with the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission in Harrisburg. The commission supported, but was not active, in preservation efforts to the extent of funding. They did refer the administrator to an architect in Norristown who was familiar with such structures. That contact was not made for several years, but when it finally was, the man pronounced that the woodwork in the Hood school house proved that it could not have been built later than 1803. That mistaken statement would keep the myth that this was a 1798 structure alive for years to come.

Restoration was on the minds of many people. The Professional Association of the School Districts of Marple and Newtown made its overture in the summer of 1955. Its chairman of special events wrote to the Home saying that not only their association but also members of both communities felt that the landmark could be restored and maintained as a monument to the history of Delaware County education. The response from the administrator of the Home was a polite let's-wait-and-see what the Board of Trustees thinks.

A more complete statement was given some five months later in November of 1955. The administrator's letter was addressed to the president of the Marple-Newtown Teachers Association. It emphasized the interest of the Board in seeing the structure restored. He stated that the physical condition was not as bad as might be expected. The roof was in good condition except for a few shingles here and there, the ceiling needed to have



Roland Smith

**This photo from the *Upper Darby News* may be the one that started the ground swell of effort to restore the school house. It was taken in the early spring of 1957 and accompanied by an article on the adoption of its likeness on the Marple-Newtown school seal.**

some lath and plastering, the walls needed some pointing, and the window frames were in good condition although all the glass panes were missing.

The administrator's letter concluded by noting that the history of the school house was not known definitely and authentically. He suggested that investigating the history of the school might be a good competitive project for an English class.

As a result of student action, the school house was adopted for the official seal of the Marple-Newtown high school in April of 1957. It had been used unofficially on class rings and as a logo since the 1940s.

In the fall of 1957, the *County Leader* editorialized that "good intentions always succumb to the dragging of feet." The newspaper asked "is it not time that Newtown Township supervisors and Newtown Township school directors undertake some procedure to insure this monument..." They went on to suggest a park area and exhorted the leaders to launch some plans.

In the spring of 1958, a member of the Parent-Teacher Association nudged the subject along with the idea that moving the school house to the





*Delaware County Daily Times*

**You can bet that tearing down a wall of Dunwoody's boyhood schoolhouse never took place during his lifetime. Arguably, there was no need to do so. The need to house an expanded array of farm equipment didn't arise until the arrival of several dozen men when the Home opened in 1924. A 1963 newspaper article confirms this by referring to a wide access being provided in 1925. The following twenty years would be hard ones for the schoolhouse. The pot bellied stove was removed now that the interior was open to the weather. This photo was taken in December, 1962.**

grounds of the new high school where it would be properly preserved as a landmark. Upon seeing this proposal in the newspaper, one member of the Board of Trustees passed the story along with the remark that he would be glad to get rid of it because we are going to be subjected to continual demands, not only for the preservation of the building, but pressure in years to come to make this a historic landmark open to the public. But that was not the prevailing opinion of the Board.

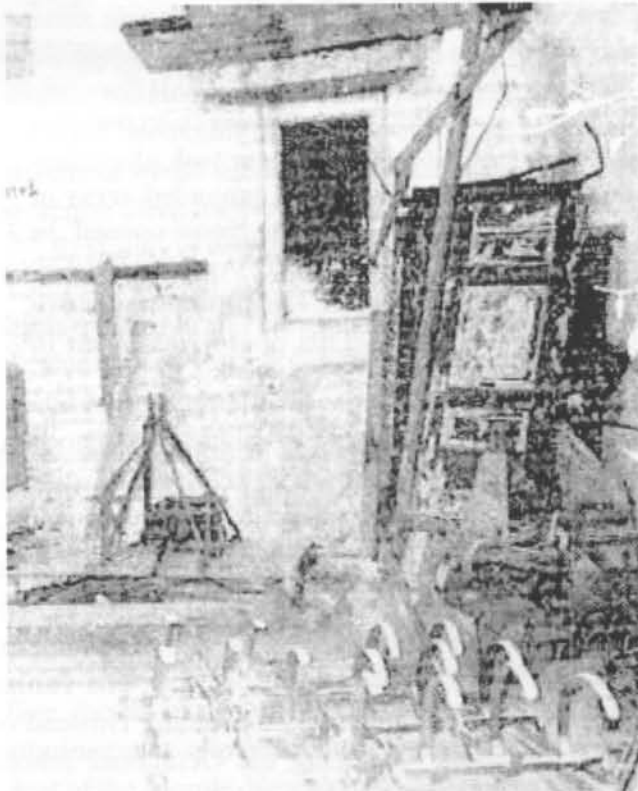
The fall of 1958 brought another group into the picture. This time it was the Marple-Newtown Junior Chamber of Commerce. They proposed to provide various artisans who would be willing to work on the school house toward complete resto-

ration. The Home had no objection to it contacting the state to see if state funding could be obtained. This plan entailed a brick or stone walk around the school. The Junior Chamber thoroughly convinced the *County Leader* that things were about to happen, as the paper wondered that it took so long for anyone to take hold of the project. The Junior Chamber was commended for "doing" instead of "talking about" restoring the Octagonal school house. That remark was nothing compared to its October 1959 outburst which ran as follows:

*Repeated offers by various civic groups over many years to restore their landmark (which dates from 1842) have fallen on deaf ears; the Home directors will not take action but*



**Here is the ceiling area that needed new lath and plastering. Wonder if HWH was about to go off to war on February 28, 1942.**



*Both, Bill Cartledge*

**General junkiness aside, the interior was not in total ruin. A harrow was one of the stored items.**

*resent anyone else offering to assume the responsibility and expense.*

At least they got the date right, and that was back in 1959.

Through it all, the Board of Trustees never lost faith in William Hood Dunwoody's intention to preserve the school he had attended in the years before the Civil War. They held the land and structure within Dunwoody control. The answer to the dilemma of how to proceed came in 1962.

It was a bread-cast-upon-the-waters blessing. Years earlier, a guest named Harry Rahn had recuperated at the Home. After recovery he went on to a successful career but never lost sight of the generosity that supported him in his time of need. He left \$5,000 to be used however the Board wished.

This sudden solution gave room outside the budget to accomplish the unexpected. A month later, architect Richard Yarnall was instructed to proceed with the rehabilitation. Yarnall, who was starting an illustrious career, was the son of a board member.

One of the problems in making an authentic restoration was the school house door. The original had been discarded over the 40 or so years since the front face was demolished. No photographs could be found. John Gable, chairman of Newtown Board of supervisors, saved the day because he had run the Dunwoody farm for some years. He described the specifics of its design to the architect who drafted blueprints from which an accurate replica could be produced. The drawing of the door is one of the items filed in the Yarnall collection at the University of Pennsylvania.

By May of 1964, the work was nearly done. A new roof and windows were provided. The original schoolmaster's desk which was thought to still be around was never located. The final cost of the year-and-a-half project would exceed the \$5000 bequest by \$1500.

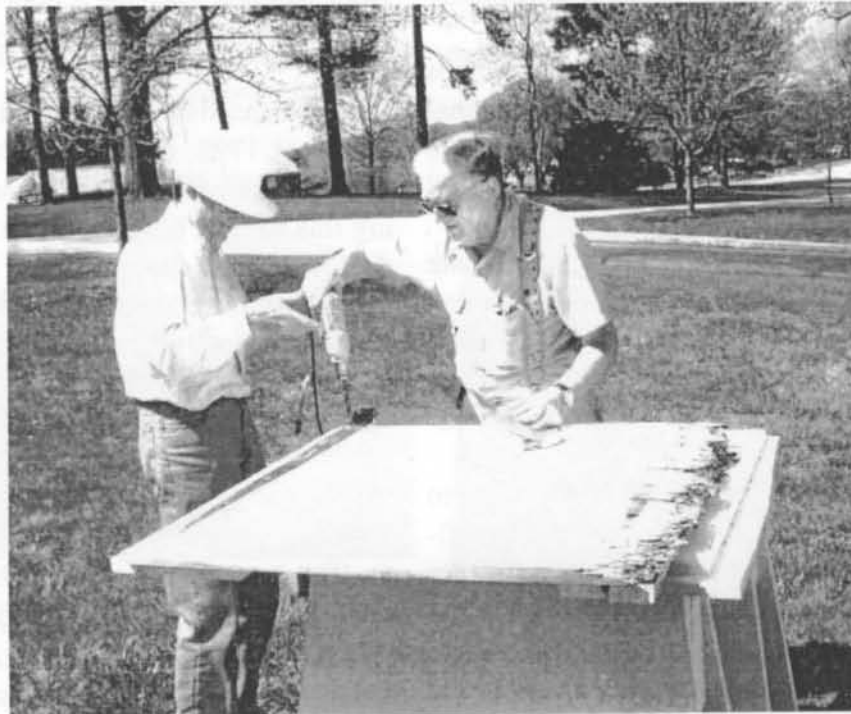


*Bill Cartledge*

These interior photos were published in 1962. The truck wasn't going anywhere with that flat tire.



This photo of unknown origin came in the box of school house memorabilia. The proportions differ from the Hood school as does the entrance side. Newtown Square's first octagonal school house was built in town on School Lane and it was smaller than the Hood School turned out to be when built a few years later. Perhaps this vine-covered school is it. The first school was torn down in or after 1909.



*Fred Kramer*

Even restored structures don't last forever. After 40 years, the door that Richard Yarnall designed had rotted at the bottom. Fred Gerkenmeyer and Carson McClain built an exact replacement in 2005.

## Gaining Recognition for the School House

Starting in the year 2000, Sue Flom, in her capacity as Director of Community Affairs, was tasked with protecting the school house by means of an historical designation. The target was to be designated on the National Register of Historic Places. This is a lesser recognition than being designated a national landmark, such as Independence Hall. The designation includes icons of ideals that shaped the nation or places that have other major historic characteristics. Nevertheless, the process proved to be extremely rigorous.

The benefits of entry on the Register include the intangible of public recognition and the far more tangible benefit of requiring extra consideration of historic significance before government money is used to knowingly or unknowingly damage or destroy the site.

The first step is to propose a particular site to the State Historic Preservation Officers. In Pennsylvania, this is done by completing forms to establish prima facie eligibility. If the officers deem the site eligible, National Park Service forms are forwarded to the applicants for them to formally nominate the property.

When the national forms, accompanying maps and photographs have been completed, the formal nomination for national status is submitted to the state for review. The process is the same for all nominations in all states.

A hearing is held at the state level, and if state approval is granted, the nomination is forwarded to the National Park Service with recommendation for national approval. The Park Service generally confers its approval based on a state's recommendation.

Nominations for a property are based on up to four specific attributes for which there is a significant contribution to American history. One category is contribution to broad patterns of history. In our case, the area of significance is education in a one-room school. Architecture is another significant category. Dunwoody claimed only these two categories although the other two categories could also apply, namely association with a significant person and a property which yields information im-

portant to history.

Key to approval by the state is the accuracy of the claims advanced. Toward this end, Sue formed a committee of residents to research the facts and prepare the forms. Members of the Schoolhouse Committee were Dolores Gerkenmeyer and Bob Freeman, both of whom dress in appropriate costume when the school is opened for field trips by elementary school students. Edith Schmidt, Fred Kramer, and later, Jane Weidmayer were the other committee members.

As the research began, the traditional date for construction of the octagonal school was 1798. This was based on an agreement between Joseph Hood, then the owner of the farm on which Dunwoody Village now stands, and two of his neighbors who agreed to build a school house. They built it on Hood's property but, as explained in an authoritative history of the county, it was built of logs.

Newtown Township acted quickly in 1836 after the state legislature passed the school district act to build a stone octagonal school house in town. After building a second school on the north side in 1839, the town then built our octagonal school in 1842.

This later date contradicts the traditional attribution of 1798, mistaken as it turned out to be. There was great emotional sentiment in considering this to be a colonial structure and the notion died hard, even though it later developed that the true facts had been publicly known for nearly fifty years. We ourselves had to make changes to reflect the corrected date. The school master and mistress would no longer dress in Colonial costume. Quill pens had to be replaced with steel pen points, and the flag needed to be updated from 13 stars to the 26 star flag used in 1842.

The land on which the school was built was owned by Isaiah Fawkes, Hood's next door neighbor on the east side where the Newtown Towers now stand. In searching the records in the Delaware County courthouse, the committee found the 1841 deed in which Fawkes donated the small parcel of land. He wanted the property back if it no longer served an educational purpose.

The history book says that the octagonal school served for about 25 years, making the year 1866 as the time when the land was to revert to Fawkes. By then Fawkes had died and his lands were owned by his daughter, Rachael Van Leer. Hood had also died and his farm had passed to James Dunwoody, his son-in-law.

Dunwoody persuaded Fawkes' daughter to sell him a parcel of land that included the plot on which the schoolhouse sat. The deed for that transaction is displayed in a frame hung in the entrance lobby at Medical West.

The nomination was prepared and sent to Harrisburg in 2004 where it was promptly bounced back for failure to follow the instructions to the letter. The photographs were digital, not film based. Fred Gerkenmeyer used his film camera to correct the shortcoming. The placement of the information was deemed incorrect and with that came the admonition to "hire a paid preparer."

Unknown to the committee, there are people and organizations whose livelihood is maintained to some degree by preparing and submitting nominations for placement on the National Register. The bureau in Harrisburg supplied a list of such preparers.

The committee searched out and engaged Jane Dorchester of West Chester to prepare the Hood

School nomination for a fixed fee. Her starting point in September of 2004 included use of any part or all the research the committee had already done. Even she who knew the ropes had a tough time and had to make adjustments and additions but the results were gratifying.

The hearing was set for December 13, 2005, a day that proved to be severely cold and windy. The nomination was received with enthusiasm and there was no delay in reaching unanimous approval. The board's only question was whether or not we opened the school for grade schoolers. Indeed we did and had the teachers right there to prove it.

Upon approval the nomination was forwarded to Washington, where it was placed on the National Register of Historic Places on February 14, 2006. The official name of the structure is the Hood Octagonal School.

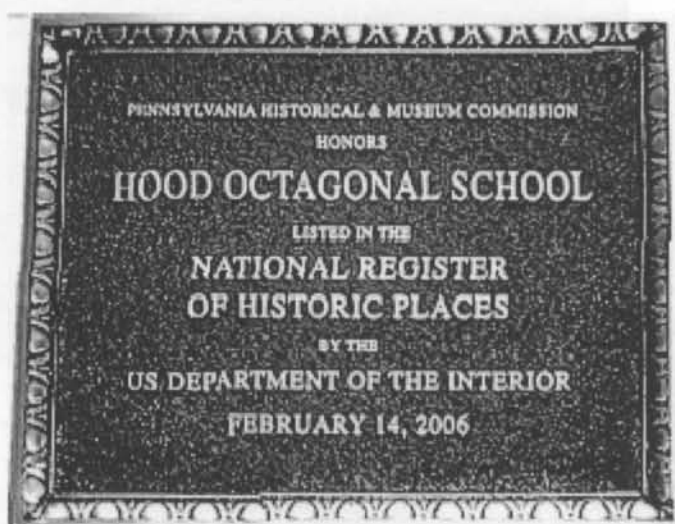
A formal celebration was held on Monday, May 8 at noontime. The Pennsylvania Museum and Historic Commission delegates delivered a bronze plaque to mark the designation. The plaque was to be mounted on the site but not attached to the structure itself.

Committee work concluded upon selection, preparation, and placement of an attractive rock mounting for the plaque.



*Angela MacDonald*

The Dunwoody contingent arrives in Harrisburg for the nomination hearing. From left to right, Bob Freeman (schoolmaster), Nancy Morrison (director replacing Sue Flom), Fred Kramer (chairman), Dolores Gerkenmeyer (school mistress), Jane Dorchester (preparer), and Fred Gerkenmeyer (restorer).



This impressive plaque was awarded at a ceremony on May 8, 2006 to commemorate the registration of the Hood Octagonal School.

## A School House in Our Lives

The rarity of an eight-sided building attracts attention and arouses curiosity. The shape is a natural as a logo for any group or organization which can identify with it. The examples of the school house appearing on the seals of the Home and Residents' Association have already been seen. In a wider sense, it is the community which takes pride in sharing the school house as a logo. Two examples are illustrated below.

The town's annual celebration of Colonial Days involves opening and showing the octagonal school house. The hosts on that day are members of the Newtown Square Historical Society. During the many years when a construction date of 1798 was ascribed to the structure, it was easy to associate the school with at least the post-colonial period.

As early as 1962, an article in the *Delaware County Daily Times* got the facts right. But it was

nice to have an earlier date so the controversy began. As recently as 1993, no conclusion had been reached although the Delaware County Planning Department had departed from the "traditional" date of 1798. Still the myth persisted until it was necessary to have verifiable facts in order to place the school house in nomination for the national register.

Interest in inspecting and enjoying the school is not at all lessened with the certainty that its land was conveyed in 1841 with construction in 1842. Nor did it lessen the interest and value in having visits by school children. Townsfolk John McCauley and Isabel Snyder always dressed in colonial attire during their long tenure as schoolmaster and school mistress. So too did Bob Freeman and Dolores Gerkenmeyer until the controversy was resolved. They then adjusted to clothing appropriate for 1842.



Fred Kramer

[LEFT:] A welcoming sign on Route 3 at each end of town proclaims the historic nature of our community which was laid out in 1681. In this 1991 design by Bob Burton, the post holding the pike is octagonal shaped to reflect the school house in the center graphic.



Sam Coco

[RIGHT:] The Rotary Club's banner combines the Hood Octagonal School with symbols of the Keystone State and the Rotary International. The blue-black-and-gold banner was designed in 1964 by Ed Kehl, then president of the Marple-Newtown Historical Society. The current banner, a souvenir paperweight, and hot plate tile continue the design in only slightly modified form.



**John McCauley**



**Bob Freeman**



**Isabel Snyder**



**Dolores Gerkenmeyer**

The curious nature of an eight-sided building lends itself in modern times to the creative recreational activities of modeling and artistry. Oil paintings, watercolors, and pen-and-ink drawings are wide-

spread and can found throughout the halls and apartments of Dunwoody Village. But the means of expression are unexpectedly wide ranging. The following is a photographic panorama starting with



*Alice Walkling*



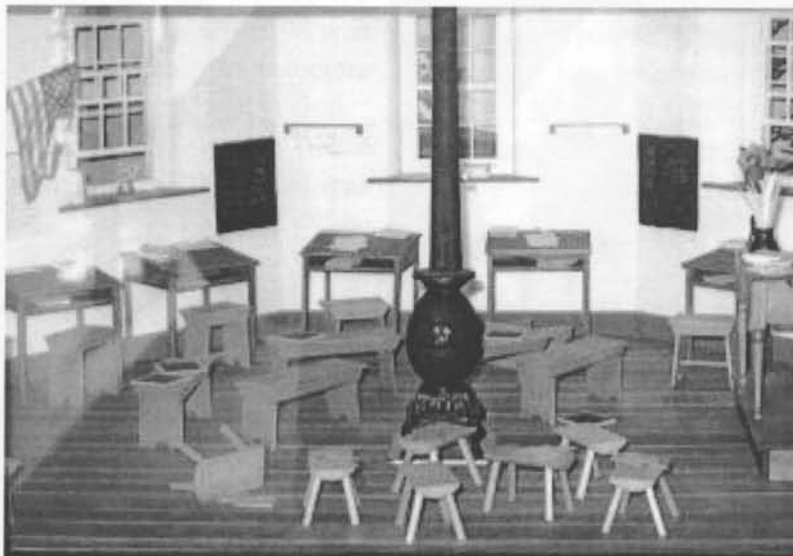
*Carol Schaeffer*

a 21st century oil painting. A postcard reproduction illustrates a watercolor. The schoolhouse is next shown as a ceramic objet d'art. The model features a small electric bulb to attract the eye and better illuminate the interior. It can be seen close up in our library. Next is a diorama with an added touch of humor as it reflects the scramble to leave the classroom when recess is declared. It occupies a place of honor in our lobby.

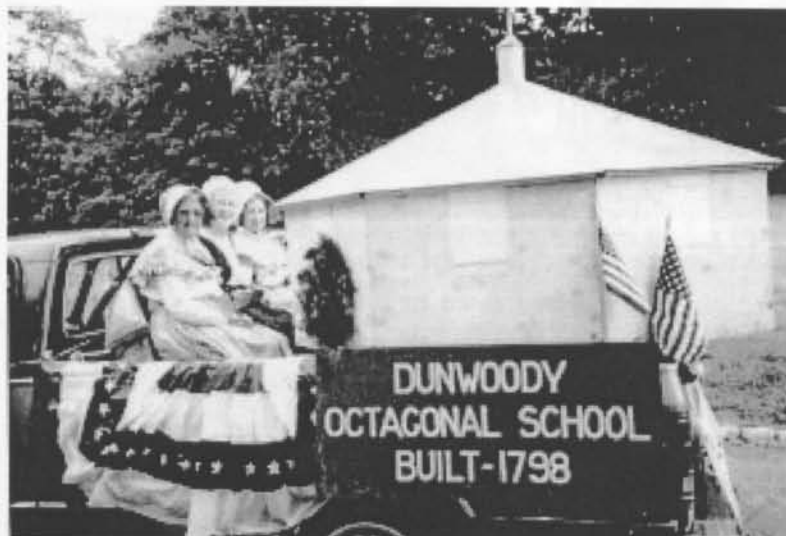
Last in our parade of photographs is a scene from the Newtown Square Fourth of July celebratory parade held in 1992. The colonial Miss Dunwoodys are unidentified. Perhaps the float symbolized Dunwoody on the March.



*Enrique J. Rios*



*Bob Freeman*



*From Dunwoody Library archives*