

252 Sunbury St.
Minersville, Pa 17954
Sept 9, 1987

Thomas Swain
Box 627 Art School Rd
Chester Springs PA

Dear Mr. Swain,

I am interested in Historic Yellow Springs because my mother, then Kathryn Kern, attended the Pennsylvania Soldiers' Orphan school from about 1880 to 1889. She always spoke of the school as Chester Springs and had many pleasant memories of the place.

What is now the Inn was a dormitory with a dining and living room on the first floor and a kitchen and back house to the side. The stone school house (which I think burned down) was on a hill behind + to the right of the dormitory. The two were connected with a covered walk. Mother remembered going up the hill to school through walls of snow after the blizzard of '88.

There were I think, two springs. The one that appears on the logo and another one (perhaps fresh water?) on the other side of the road that led to the school. This area was the parade ground and the boys in the school dressed in Union Army uniforms drilled here to entertain the fine people who came "to take the waters".

The girls did not have uniforms. Each girl was allowed to choose her dress material and pattern and her clothes were made under the guidance of a Miss Funderwest who was the seamstress and worked in the building across the road from the present Inn.

Miss Etta Woodward as the matron, Mr. Roberts the baker, and Mrs. Gamble the cook. Others on the staff were: Mr. Bell, Mrs. Liebershultz and Miss Nettie Smith. Miss Hellis and Mr. MacNamee were on the board.

On Sundays Catholics went to their own church. My mother went to a church which she spoke of as Vincents.

The teachers and staff at Chester Springs tried to make the place home to the children. In spring there were walks in the woods and games in the meadow. My mother especially remembered finding water cress in the clear brook and going nutting in the fall. As they studied in the dormitory living room, there were always bowls of nuts, apples, and cookies on the tables. The children were entertained by story tellers (some from Philadelphia) and Delsartian elocutionists who sang and gave dramatic readings or recited poetry - all with a strong Victorian moral!

My mother enjoyed the school so much that she went back to a reunion (I don't know what year but somewhere around 1915) and often was driven to Chester Springs to visit her old haunts.

Some of the children who attended when my mother did were: Katie Bell, Ann Kelly, Lou Eddy, Frank Gibbon, Em Conlin, Ida Mae Small, Annie Parron Small, Kitty Mitchell, Kate Airy, and Minnie Eppengeller, and, of course, the Kerns my mother's siblings: Louise, Jack, Daisy and Clinton.

It is possible that the names of some of these may appear on class rolls or their faces mirabile dicta may appear in class photos!

Sincerely,

*Lauretta Weimer Murphy
(Mrs. Wm J.)*

note: My mother Kathryn Kern Weimer died in 1949