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Welcome to Cornwall Manor

by BILL DONAHUE

Older adults come to historic **Cornwall Manor** in bucolic Lebanon County to pursue lives of enrichment, engagement, and peace of mind.

Cornwall Manor is a place unlike any other. Spread across two wooded campuses equipped with first-rate accommodations, amenities, and healthcare capabilities, the 190-acre continuing care retirement community in Lebanon County, Pennsylvania, offers a one-of-a-kind experience designed to enrich the lives of vibrant adults ages 60 and older.

“People come here from all over the country, not just Central Pennsylvania or the Philadelphia area,” says Jennifer Margut, Vice President of Marketing and Public Relations for Cornwall Manor. “We have residents who move here from Florida, the Carolinas, the Midwest, New England. Most of our residents live independently, but we offer the full continuum of care so they don’t have to worry about what happens if their health ever changes.”

Residents are drawn to Cornwall Manor’s setting—abundant trees, miles of walking trails, and acres of surrounding farmland and open spaces. At the same time, residents appreciate the proximity to nearby cities such as Harrisburg, Hershey, Lancaster, and Reading, where they can partake in world-class culture, restaurants, and other attractions.

Prospective residents are especially interested in Cornwall Manor’s historical significance. The property’s history as a retirement community began nearly 75 years ago, when a dozen older adults moved into the 29-room Buckingham Mansion, which remains a central part of the community to this day. That said, the property dates as far back as the 1740s, when a man named Peter Grubb built the Cornwall Iron Furnace.

A flourishing ironmaking enterprise that made cannonballs for the Revolutionary War,

the Cornwall Iron Furnace was later purchased by the wealthy American industrialist Robert Coleman, whose heirs would operate the furnace until 1883. The surrounding estate served as a summer home for the Colemans, then considered one of the wealthiest families in Pennsylvania. When the last remaining member of the Coleman family passed away in 1946, her death brought about a dramatic reimagining of the property for the betterment of the community.

“Her name was Margaret Coleman Freeman Buckingham, and her will stated that the property had to be used for good,” Margut says. “The property at the time—five buildings and 70 acres—was sold to the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference of the United Methodist Church. That’s how Cornwall Manor got started in 1949, and those five buildings are still in use today.”

The Buckingham Mansion, built circa 1773, has since been renovated to include seven residential apartments, a reading room, and a music room, while the former Carriage House now serves as residential apartments and a fitness center. As for the Cornwall Iron Furnace, the site has become a tourist destination operated by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.

“The community has come a long way in 75 years,” Margut adds. “We have a pay-as-you-go restaurant (no set meal plan), a full-fledged library that’s connected to the Lebanon County Library System, a fitness center, an indoor pool, pharmacy services, and a wellness center staffed by doctors who come to our campus, rather than residents having to go out and see the doctor. Residents also benefit from lots of community space and amenities.”

The emphasis on health and wellness extends

to the Trailside Organic Farm, which provides organically grown produce to nurture residents’ health. Established two years ago through a partnership with Rodale Institute, the two-acre farm is managed by a pair of Rodale farmers and tended by resident volunteers. The farm yields fresh vegetables for all of the community’s dining rooms, and also provides produce for a weekly farmers market where residents can purchase organically grown lettuces, potatoes, and tomatoes, among other items.

Community improvement is a way of life at Cornwall Manor—for the residents who live there, and for the property itself. In 2004, for example, Cornwall Manor purchased more than 100 acres for an expansion known as The Woods. Connected to the main campus via the Lebanon Valley Rail Trail, The Woods consists of 120 homes for independent living, though Margut foresees further expansion with the addition of a clubhouse and some apartments.

Cornwall Manor will continue to upgrade and renovate to better serve residents. For example, the 68-unit apartment building called Laurel Place, which is located in the center of the main Buckingham Campus, has undergone extensive renovations that include updating HVAC systems for all apartments, as well as adding balconies to apartments on the upper floors and redoing patios for the ground floor.

“People come here to live life on their terms,” Margut says. “No matter their situation, we are here to fulfill their lives with opportunities for enrichment, and they have the continuum of care available to them if their health ever changes.”

As Cornwall Manor prepares to celebrate its 75-year anniversary, the not-for-profit community remains focused on continually refining its offerings to reflect the needs of its residents. Even though the campus may evolve, some things will never change.

“Everybody is welcome here,” she adds. “Nobody is asked to leave if they ever run out of assets. We have a \$32 million endowment for benevolence, so once someone is here at Cornwall Manor, they are going to be taken care of. That is part of our mission.” ■



Cornwall Manor

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Photos courtesy of Cornwall Manor