

farm woman aids

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tension free vacation experience with a family. Reverend Willard Parsons in 1877 in his newly assigned parish in Sherman, Pa., after being transferred from Brooklyn, spoke on the scripture, "In as much as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren even so ye have done it unto me." He proposed to the congregation that they open their homes to these children he had seen in New York City. Sixty-six children arrived at Sherman that year. Parsons left the ministry to exert a full time effort in this volunteer program which today has grown into one of New York City's largest charities, a flourishing, philanthropic corporation with two interrelated vacation services serving over 13,000 children with vacation experiences in private homes and 2,500 children in a camping experience in Fishkill, New York, 80 miles north of New York City.

The children, ranging in age from 5 to 12, are selected from the five boroughs of New York City by 40 different organizations including religious, community, police and health. Host homes are in 12 eastern states from Maine to Virginia. About one-half of the children every year are reinvited by their hosts to visit again for as long as six weeks of the summer. First time visiting children may stay only two weeks. They may be reinvited every summer until they are 16 years old.

Mrs. Buckwalter has served on or been the director for the Lancaster County Friendly Town committee for many years. Besides administering the publicity and recruiting host families, during her tenure she embarked on the unique experience of searching out the unwritten history of Lancaster County's involvement in the Fresh Air Fund. In the early 1960's, the New York City office of the Fresh Air Fund sent an old photograph of Fresh Air children found in their files to Mrs. Buckwalter, the area director, because the only identification on the back was the name of a Lancaster photographer who worked during the 1890's.

George Heigis of 19 Belmont Avenue, Lancaster, identified the site in the picture as the old Manheim High School, long since razed. He suggested Miss Clara Hamaker, a resident in the Pleasant View Home, Manheim, might remember or recognize some of these children because her family had had Fresh Air children in their home when she was young. Mrs. Buckwalter and Mr. Heigis visited the elderly Miss Hamaker and were as amazed as Miss Hamaker was when she identified herself along with the Fresh Air child who was their guest 75 years ago.

By continuing the search for names in the Manheim Sentinel, 1892, and the Litz Record, many youngsters' names were found. Through Mrs. Buckwalter's search, The Lancaster Committee of the Fresh Air Fund received the only 75 years' participation award ever given. By the coincidence of a photographer's name and the efforts of several people in researching the picture's history, the history of Lancaster County's involvement in the Fresh Air Fund was authenticated. The Herald Tribune, which publicized the Fresh Air Fund program free of charge each year but did not have a role in operating the Fund, recognized the impressive history compiled by Mrs. Buckwalter with these words printed on the cover:

For 75 years of opening homes and hearts as a people and historic community to underprivileged children from the teeming neighborhoods of New York City.

As in the past, the Fund is now recruiting volunteer host families for children this summer. Volunteers are screened by local committee members and are given details of the program and its operation and specific information about the two-weeks' visit by the children. Lancaster County placed 600 children last year into 15 different committee areas. Getting the children into the right areas as designated on the train platform in Lancaster when they arrive is basically the job of an experienced traffic director and past Fresh Air guest — George J. Gorodensky, a Lancaster City Policeman who came from New York City for 11 summers to visit with the Amos G. Supplee family, Intercourse.

Anyone interested in receiving more information about having Fresh Air children in their homes should contact the Fresh Air Fund, 300 West Forty-third Street, New York City, New York, 10036. Area committee members will be notified of this interest and local people will follow up the request.

During the national Fund's centennial year, an effort is being made to contact former Fresh Air children. If any of our readers have been hosts and know the location of former Fresh Air children, they are to please contact the Fresh Air Fund, 300 West Forty-third Street, New York, New York, 10036. There are a roughly estimated total of 1,000,000 former Fresh Air children.

Returning to the primary point of Mrs. Buckwalter's conversation, the Fund is searching for volunteer host families who will allow a New York City child to visit with them for two weeks this summer to experience for perhaps the first time in his life some "good growing weather and a tension free vacation away from his normal life in a crowd."

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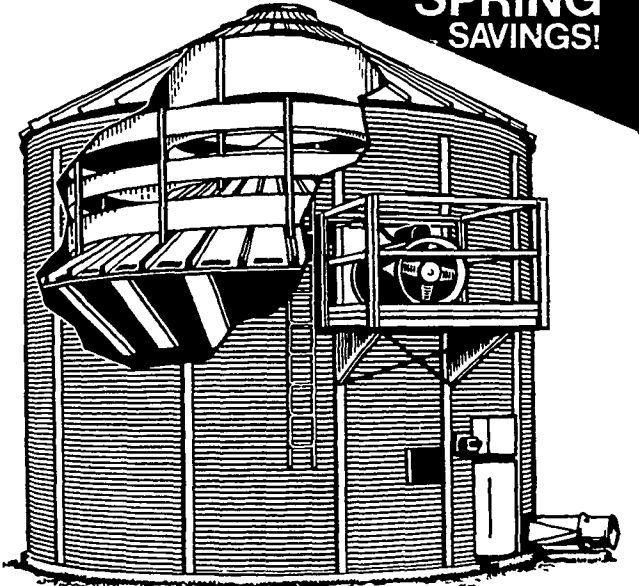
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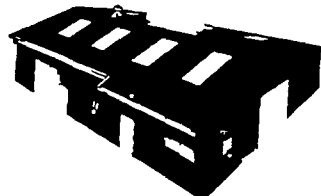
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