

Hands-on
House

Handprints

A place to feel, touch, learn and grow.



Lancaster, PA

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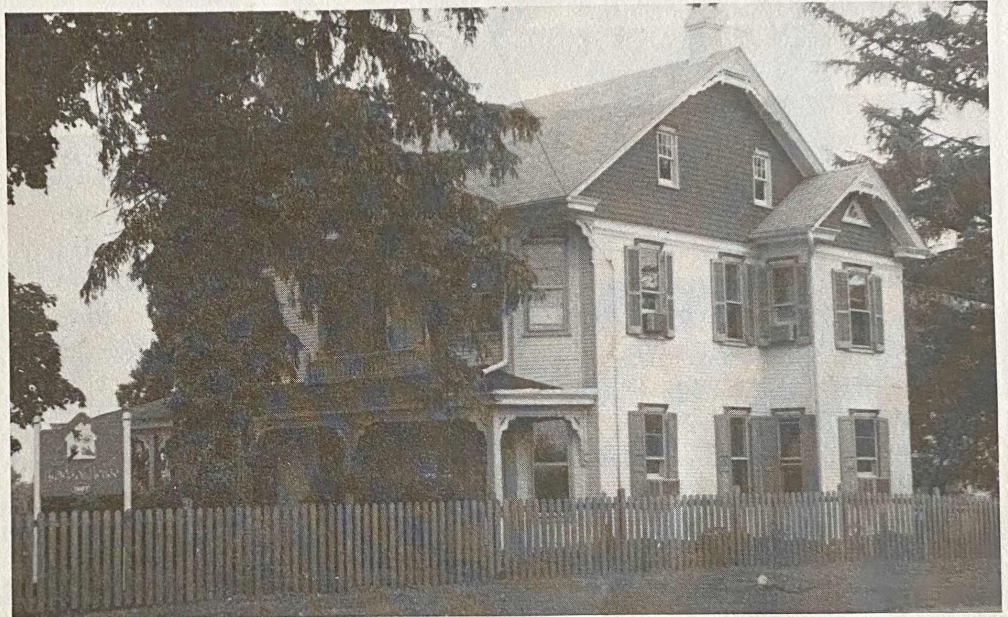
A Hands-on Fairy Tale

How did Hands-on House get started? Why are there names on your fence? Are you affiliated with any other group or museum? These are questions frequently asked us by visitors curious about our roots. We opened our doors in October, 1987, but Hands-on House really started a long time ago. Here's our story . . .

Once upon a time (in 1982), two women named Bev Zimmerman and Barbara Platt took their kids to visit children's museums in other parts of the country. Excited by these experiences, they wished for a children's museum in Lancaster. Realizing that, unlike Jack and the Beanstalk, they couldn't just plant some magic beans and expect instant results, they approached the Junior League of Lancaster for help.

In 1982, the Junior League formed a task force to research the feasibility of starting a youth museum. The Junior League undertook the youth museum as a project – committing seed money and volunteers. It was through their effort that Hands-on House became a reality.

Now, all good fairy tales need a magic castle. In this case, the magic castle proved to be the Pierce Landis House. This house has been owned by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania since 1970, and had been serving as a residence for the Regional Director of the Pennsylvania Historic and Museum Commission. In 1984, the state agreed to make the Pierce Landis House available as the future site of



the children's museum. They also committed a good portion of the money required to make the building suitable for use as a public facility.

During the next several years a community awareness campaign was launched including several demonstration events featuring prototypes of possible hands-on exhibits. At the same time, renovations to the Pierce Landis House began, along with fundraising to renovate the rooms and build exhibits. Funds and in-kind gifts were donated by individuals and businesses, and the Junior League conducted a "Purchase a Picket" campaign, selling the personalized pickets which comprise our fence.

In 1986, a volunteer board of directors was formed to oversee our non-profit museum. Although Hands-on House currently has a

staff of two fulltime and six part-time employees who manage daily operations, we still have a board of directors who are responsible for guiding the museum.

Early and mid-1987 were devoted to creating the museum's first exhibits. Talented community members donated many, many hours planning and constructing exhibits (not unlike the elves in "The Elves and the Shoemaker"). By October 1987, Hands-on House was ready for the public, and the public was ready for us! More than 34,000 visitors beat a path to our door in our first year.

So far we've lived happily ever after, but this story doesn't end here. As the museum grows and changes, stay tuned for the continuing story.

