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Liongate
development.

Village Walk.

Over decade later, construction begins on historic property

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A 52-acre development of more than 300 housing units, is under construction in Uwchlan Township, bringing to an end over a decade of speculation on what would finally become of the site.

Located on Rt. 113, east of Rt. 100, adjoining the Pennsylvania Turnpike property, construction of Liongate began earlier this month. The plan calls for a combination of rental apartments and twin homes.

"We don't have the figures worked up on it yet," said John Hoopes, adding it is going to be a "very big" development. Construction is progressing rapidly.

Township officials and Hoopes, who heads Heritage Developers, headquartered at the executive offices of Hoopes Inc., Better Homes and Gardens, agreed that improvements to Rt. 113 at Liongate will be made. Plans call for a concrete island and deceleration lane there and paving of the road's shoulder. Heritage will provide the improvements.

Liongate is one of two major developments underway in Uwchlan. Village Walk, Lionville, has opened its construction office and has a sign posted advising

apartments will be available.

Both subdivision plans were delayed over the years by township reviews, court actions and the changing economy. That was particularly true of Liongate, which included a mobile home park proposal when it first emerged in the late 1960s.

It's history that makes **Liongate** different. While Hoopes plans an architectural style in the "middle range," the complex includes an historic house and barn that are to be incorporated into the recreational area.

"It's one of the two Philips family ancestral homes in the township," said Susannah Brody of the Uwchlan historical commission. The first houses the offices of Pickering Creek Industrial Park, after restoration by Knauer & Carr. Raymond Carr, PCIP president, has been recognized for his restoration work.

Officials explained there really wasn't any decision to be made as to whether the second homestead would be preserved. The court decision, permitting the development under a previous ownership, specified the house and barn be included.

The material nominating both homesteads to the national register of historic places points out the first home now is in an industrial park and the second will be part of a modern housing subdivision.

Part of the significance of both properties goes beyond structural history to the contribution of the Philips family down through the generations, beginning in the mid-1700s, after Joseph, 39, and Mary Philips, 45, left southern Wales, arriving in West Chester (then Turk's Head). They brought with them four sons, David, John, Josiah and Joseph. In August 1768, the family moved to Uwchlan.

"Few families today can boast such a tight unity that impels its descendants to meet annually — 200 or more strong — at or near to the home of their first American ancestor. The Philips family has been meeting for 109 consecutive years to honor the 1755 arrival in Chester County of Joseph and Mary Philips," reported Estelle Cremers of the French and Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust Inc. and Brody, in the description supplied to the national register last year.

"In a day of scattered family ties and loosening clan relationships, this is a remarkable show of binding filial respect."

Because of the family character, this particular housing development, aimed toward the middle market, may be especially fitting.

"Joseph and Mary Philips belonged to the great middle class depending on their daily work for a living. They inspired their sons to look for, encourage and lead all enabling causes, to support the forces of government even if they did not thoroughly agree with every decision, to aid underprivileged and oppressed peoples, to respect self-improvement as self-fulfillment," the documentation said.

"When there were no public schools in this state, they prominently identified with the movement to establish them. They believed in freedom for the individual, no matter his race, gender or creed," Cremers said.

The four-bay house at Liongate, with low pitched roof lines, was partly built in 1780. It is of heavy field stone and stuccoed. The barn, which Cremers indicated is in good condition, has supporting pillars that are unique to Chester County, although examples are becoming rare. Made of small stones, they are set in mortar and shaped into round columns.

When Neil B. DeRiemer and Newton B. DeRiemer and the estate of Richard L. Ewing sold the tract to Liongate Development Corp. for \$875,000 earlier this year, they were handling the 13th change of ownership for the property since 1853, when John Philips sold to Isaac M. Sloanaker. The price tag stayed well below six figures until 1968, when 48 acres was sold for \$100,000.