



**Downingtown Area Historical Society**  
**Hist-O-Gram**

*Interesting local history, accessed from our archives*

[www.downingtownareahistoricalociety.org](http://www.downingtownareahistoricalociety.org)

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## Where and What Is This?



**The first person to correctly identify the site of this photo will be recognized as a truly perceptive scholar. Please send your identification entries to:**

**[Info@downingtownareahistoricalociety.org](mailto:Info@downingtownareahistoricalociety.org).**

## **She lived in this Sears mail order house for 16 years**

We received a bunch of information about the locations of Sears mail order houses in the Downingtown area, after we introduced that topic in last week's Hist-O-Gram, which can be accessed via:

[www.downingtowntareahistoricalociety.org/Histograms/2013%20Hist-O-Grams/April%2011%202013%20Hist-O-Gram.pdf](http://www.downingtowntareahistoricalociety.org/Histograms/2013%20Hist-O-Grams/April%2011%202013%20Hist-O-Gram.pdf).

And you'll find much more information about Sears mail order houses at: [www.searsarchives.com/homes/index.htm](http://www.searsarchives.com/homes/index.htm).

One of those houses is at 201 Boot Road, which is located one block east of the intersection of Boot Road and Brandywine Avenue (Route 322) in East Caln Township. We learned about that place from Caroline Ash, DHS Class of 1962, a Chicago resident, who lived there for 16 years with her parents, Herbert and Harriet Ash and her older sister, Harriet, better known as "Sis."

While her mother was recovering in Chester County Hospital for a week after she was born in 1944, Caroline's father purchased the house and moved the family as a surprise for her mother.

"Boot Road was then a tree-lined, two-lane street. It really was a charming little neighborhood," she says. "Across the street, the neighbors shared a huge victory garden, a 'truck patch' as my father referred to it. My father worked at Downingtown Paper; so it was a short walk to work for him."

Caroline believes the house was built around 1930, but it's unclear who the original owners were. Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Brookover rented the place in the early years, when Mr. Brookover was superintendent of the Downingtown Paper Co. The Ashes sold the property to the McBall family in 1960.



**The photo above, taken several years ago, shows Caroline Ash, who lived with her family at 201 Boot Road from 1944 to 1960.**

When she lived there, Caroline remembers there was an enclosed front porch and all of the living quarters were on the first floor. Above the first floor was a crawl space, which could be reached by pulling down a trap door, located in the ceiling of the hall.

Coal was used to heat the house. Caroline suspects today's environmental agencies wouldn't approve of the air quality, after a truck delivered coal through a window into a bin in their basement.

The Ashes paid a \$1 a year to lease part of their backyard from the nearby Downingtown Paper Co. "The paper mill was a good place to get comic books," which were part of the wastepaper Dopaco recycled into new paperboard stock, adds Caroline. Also, "the mill workers were great Girl Scout cookie customers."

Obviously, it was a different world back in the 40s and 50s. "One telephone and one bathroom worked for four people," claims Caroline.

The building's current owners are Colburn Brothers, a car repair business whose garage is in the back, on Reed Street. They were unaware that they owned a Sears mail order house.

Also, there are two Sears mail order houses next to each other, near the intersection of Bondsville Road and G.O. Carlson Boulevard in Thorndale. Rick Milne has owned his Sears home and his sign business, known as Tam **Arte Design Studio**, at 103 Bondsville Road for some 20 years. Rick says the original owner of his place was Clyde Mann, a Lukens Steel foreman, who built the Sherbourne model, which cost \$1,200, in 1925. In recent years, Rick replaced the cedar shake exterior with a new version of cedar shake siding, which includes insulation on the underside.

Rick advised us that Larry McGibboney owns the Osborne model of the Sears mail order houses, which is next door, at 105 Bondsville Road. When that house originally was built, ca. 1925, it served as a schoolhouse, on the land now occupied by the CVS Pharmacy, at the intersection Routes 30 and 340 in Thorndale. Several years later, that house became a residence after it was moved next to his place on Bondsville Road.

We'll be providing more stories about other Sears mail order houses in the Downingtown area in future issues of the Hist-O-Gram.

## **They raised funds to build a stone arch holding a historic bell**



**These Brownies, shown with principal Dr. Michael Solon, raised funds to pay for the materials used to build an arch that houses the historic bell at Bradford Heights School.**

Brownie Troop 41188, comprised of third graders at Bradford Heights School, recently completed a community service project that raised funds and sold Girl Scout cookies to pay for the materials needed to construct a stone arch that houses the historic bell. The bell had been used at a nearby country school on Romig Road in West Bradford Township from 1876 to 1941. The project was suggested to the troop by Dr. Michael Solon, principal of the school.

Robert T. Romig (1918-2007), who had attended the one-room schoolhouse, and his wife, Susanna Elston Romig (1920-2011), bought the former schoolhouse in 1949, and converted it into their home in 1949. Several years ago, she donated the school bell to Bradford Heights School.

Now, the bell rests in front of the flagpole at the school's entrance. The stone arch was created and constructed by Don Landsman of Old World Masonry, Downingtown. The bell was cleaned, painted and made ready for display by David O'Reilly of Reilly Remodeling, Downingtown. Both contractors donated their labor and time, and a good portion of the materials necessary to complete the project.

Troop 4188 is honored to be part of a project that brought some of Downingtown's history back to life, because Susanna Romig exemplified what the Girl Scouts stand for. Raised on farms in southeastern Pennsylvania, she excelled in school, and after graduating from Downingtown High School in 1937, she went on to earn a teaching degree from West Chester State Teacher's College (now WCU). She taught upper grades in several one-room schools in the area. She also demonstrated kindness and generosity by giving the bell to an elementary school.

## **It's the eastern end of the Brandywine Trail**



Ben Bruton is a truly perceptive scholar because he was the first person to correctly identify the site of last week's Where & What Is This? photo, taken by Joe Moser. It's the eastern end of the Brandywine Trail, near the intersection of Route 322 and Skelp Level Road.

The 2.4-mile trail is a cooperative project done by West Bradford and East Bradford Townships. It extends along Brandywine Creek, from the Brandywine Meadow Preserve, near Trestle Bridge area in West Bradford, and then crosses a pedestrian bridge into the Harmony Hill Nature area in East Bradford. From that point, the trail continues along the abandoned trolley line bed, which was used to transport people between West Chester and Downingtown, and on to the West Valley Nature area, as shown above. The 8-to-10-foot-wide trail was designed to accommodate walkers, joggers and bicyclists.

The townships received \$1.7 million in federal, state, county and local funding to create the trail. Ultimately, the trail along Route 322 will be linked to a corridor that extends from the Delaware state line to the northern boundary of Chester County, and includes the Struble Trail in the Downingtown area.

## **Coming events & activities in Downingtown area**

### ***DHS Alumni Assn. banquet***

The banquet will be held from 5-10 PM Saturday, April 20 at Whitford Country Club. The honored guest is Ron Ditzler, former choir director from 1969 to 1977. More information can be found on the website: [www.downingtowndalumni.org](http://www.downingtowndalumni.org).

### ***Prescription Drug Take Back Day***

The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) has scheduled another National Prescription Drug Take Back Day, which will take place from 10 AM to 2 PM on Saturday, April 27, at the Downingtown Borough Hall Annex Building, 4 W. Lancaster Ave., Downingtown. This is an opportunity for those who missed the previous events, or who have subsequently accumulated unwanted, unused and expired prescription drugs, to safely dispose of those medications.

In the five previous Take-Back events, the DEA, in conjunction with its state, local, and tribal law enforcement partners, have collected more than 2 million pounds (1,018 tons) of prescription medications that were removed from circulation.

The National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day aims to provide a safe, convenient, and responsible means of disposal, while also educating the general public about the potential for abuse of these medications. For more info, call 610-269-0344, ext. 200 or visit the Borough website at [www.downingtowndalumni.org](http://www.downingtowndalumni.org).

### ***DHS West Post Prom Party***

The 10th annual DHS West Post Prom Party will be held at the Lionville YMCA. All seniors are invited, and they don't have to go to the Prom to come to the party. This year's theme is "Passport to the World." The YMCA will be transformed into a night filled with fun and activities, including the indoor pool, using exciting places to tour throughout the world, while providing a safe and fun environment for all. Last year's event drew over 250 seniors and their guests.

The event is coordinated and funded by parents and members of the community. All funds that are raised will be used for the event and are utilized in securing activities, games, food and prizes.

Volunteers are needed for all committees, and parents of students in all grade levels are encouraged to get involved. Please do not wait until your child is a senior to get involved.

Those who wish to help are invited to join us at 7 PM at meetings being held in Room 139 at DHS West on **May 14**.

Please check out the P3 website: [www.dwestpostprom.com](http://www.dwestpostprom.com) for more details and to sign up as a volunteer.

***Savings opportunities available at DARC***

Discount Movie Tickets: \$7.50, cash only. Honored at all Regal Entertainment Group locations (Regal Cinemas, United Artists Theatres, and Edwards Theatres). Valid for all show times. There may be a \$2.50 surcharge for the first 12 days of select films or a \$2.50 surcharge for IMAX Giant Screen Theatres.

For more info/complete price list on these opportunities and upcoming programs, go to the DARC website [www.darcinfo.com](http://www.darcinfo.com), or call 610-269-9260, or stop by the DARC Office (8:30 AM-4:30 PM, Monday thru Friday), 114 Bell Tavern Road Downingtown.

***Banquet Room for Rent***

The Downingtown (Williamson) Masonic Lodge, a non-profit organization located at 210 Manor Ave. has a Banquet Room for rent. The area is perfect for parties of up to 80 people and has a full kitchen. Rental fees are very reasonable. Call 610-269-3555 for more information.

***Joseph's People, Downingtown Chapter***

An ecumenical support mission to help un/underemployed people; run entirely by volunteers. We have been at St. Joseph's since 1995. Meets 7:30 PM on the 2nd & 4th Tues. of the month. All are welcome. Visit web page, [www.josephspeople.org](http://www.josephspeople.org) or just come to a meeting at St. Joseph's Parish Meeting Room behind the school, 460 Manor Ave., Downingtown. Call 610 873-7117. Leave Message. Leader: Cheryl Spaulding, Email: [JPCheryl@verizon.net](mailto:JPCheryl@verizon.net).

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**Hist-O-Grams are emailed weekly to members and friends of the Downingtown Area Historical Society. If you want to make a comment, add your email address to the sign-up box on the home page of our website. We won't share or sell any email addresses. Or if you want your email address deleted from the list, send an email to:**

**[Info@downingtownareahistoricalociety.org](mailto:Info@downingtownareahistoricalociety.org).**