



Downingtown Area Historical Society
Hist-O-Gram

Interesting local history, accessed from our archives

www.downingtownareahistoricalociety.org

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Where and What Is This?



The first person to correctly identify this site will be recognized as a truly perceptive scholar. Better yet, they will win a \$25 gift card from F.H. Swisher Plumbing and Heating, which is to be used at a local restaurant.

Please send your responses to: Info@downingtownareahistoricalociety.org.

Local news items published in April 1977

The following news items were originally published in the *East Branch Citizen* in April 1977.

Dr. Charles Micken, superintendent of schools, noted that, although there was a possibility of a **14 percent real estate tax increase**, the local school system's cost of education per student was at the bottom of the ladder, compared to other districts in the county.

Mary Mahan, Class of 1927, was honored by at the **DHS Alumni Association's** 90th annual banquet. The association also recognized Debra Parry and David Forbes as the outstanding girl and boy seniors in the Class of 1977. The association's officers were Duke Charles, president; Francis Summers, first vice president; William Mason, second vice president; Margaret Stern, financial secretary; Hazel Miller, recording secretary; and Turie Hayes, corresponding secretary.

Rhonda Althouse and Michael McCarraher of **St. Joseph's School** each took first place in the girls' and boys' competition in the oratorical competition sponsored by the Downingtown Optimists Club.

Members of the committee at **St. Paul's Lutheran Church**, Lionville, responsible for the renovation of the barn on the church property and the construction of a new nave included: Richard Feldman, chairman; Harry Gebhart, vice chairman; George Drenker, Donna Dunn, Arthur Freas, John Green, Richard Jacobson, Milton Maslin, Herbert Wilt, Dale Smith, Walter Dauber, Anne Bennett, Eric Bittmann, Fred Jaeschke, Donald Parkhurst, Reba Vasile, Joseph Zona, Helen Freimuth and Dorothy Wright.

The congregation of **Messiah Lutheran Church**, Downingtown, voted to buy the gray, stone house at 41 W. Lancaster Ave., to be used for Sunday School classes.

Deacons recently ordained at **Windsor Baptist Church**, Eagle, were James Dewees, Donald Anthony, Dean Seese, Edward Popjoy and Walter Styer.

Members of the nominating committee at **St. James Episcopal Church**, Downingtown, were Ed Kirkbride, RuthAnn Gillooly, Thomas Greenleaf, Jack Henry and David Landis.

Dan Tabas presented plans to the East Caln Township planning commission to build a 191-room hotel on his land across Route 30 from the **Downingtown Inn**. Established by Dan Tabas and his brother Charles, the inn had been sold to the Ramada Inns Inc. several years ago. In recent weeks, Ramada Inns announced plans to sell the inn back to the Tabas brothers. The brothers also bought the Black Hawk Apartments and Convenience Center in Downingtown for \$3.3 million

The **Uwchlan Ambulance Corps** planned to build a new headquarters on a 3.5-acre tract along Welsh Pool Road. The corps had been renting one bay in the Lionville Fire Co. The corps also recently bought a second ambulance.

Recent **property transfers** included: 5 W. Merion Circle, East Brandywine, \$58,060; 1526 Fox Run Drive, West Bradford, \$56,150; 82 Winding Way, East Caln, \$90,000; 274 Highland Ave., Downingtown, \$49,250; 566 Westwood Drive, Uwchlan, \$67,750; 11 Davis Rd., West Pikeland, \$67,000.

Officers of the **West Bradford Home and School Association** were: Barbara Campbell, president; Genise Lewis, first vice president; Angelo Baroni, second vice president; Lynn Huston, treasurer; and Barbara Shearer, secretary.

New officers of the **Downingtown Jaycees** were Charles Shagren, president; Russ Jones, external vice president; Lee Hawthorne, internal vice president; John DiBenedetto, secretary; Joseph Darlington, treasurer; Robert Noble, chaplain; and Jack Oberle, state director.

Recently elected to lead the **Downingtown Junior Woman's Club** were Mrs. William Ogborn, president; Mrs. William McQueen, first vice president; Mrs. Edward McDermott, second vice president; Mrs. Michael Doyle, recording secretary; Mrs. James Deisinger, corresponding secretary; and Mrs. James Pinola, treasurer.

The **Community Club of Uwchlan** was awarded the George Washington Medal by the Freedoms Foundation, Valley Forge, for their efforts to maintain the 1756 Uwchlan Meetinghouse in Lionville.

Jay Lamme was honored by the **East Brandywine Fire Co.** for his many years as a fire policeman and waiter at banquets, and for organizing the annual antique show. Also recognized was John Neff, chief engineer.

Info on Trestle Bridge guards' shed found, but we're still looking for more details

Patience is required when doing historical research; even if you're trying to find details about an activity that occurred only about 70 years ago. We've learned that lesson once again, while pursuing information on the volunteers who guarded the Pennsylvania Railroad's Trestle Bridge during World War II. The bridge, which is no longer used, ran in the Downingtown area, along the border of the Johnstown section of the borough and West Bradford Township. It was part of the PRR's Trenton Cut-Off system, which bypassed the tracks in the Philadelphia area.

We recently uncovered some of the information we're looking for, while talking to members of the Mascherino family. Brothers Jimmy and Joe, who were West Ward School students back then, told us that their father, Dominic "Daddy" Mascherino, was one of the guys who guarded the bridge.

They also recalled that Attilio "Barrelhouse" Sciarretta, was a guard at the bridge, but we haven't been able to find any more information about his involvement, so far.

Both Mascherino brothers remembered that the local volunteer guards were usually posted in a shack, which was situated on the hill above Johnstown, parallel with the tracks on the bridge. Joe says the guards reached the shack by walking up an old path, which was too rough to handle vehicles. Apparently slapped together with discarded pieces of scrap wood, Jimmy characterized the guards' hut as a "ramshackle" structure, while Joe says it looked like a "hillbilly outhouse."

Obviously, those descriptions of the shack doesn't sound like it was worth salvaging after the war, and it certainly wouldn't be confused with the well-constructed shed that was used as an enemy plane spotting site in the yard of Donato Menna at 428 W. Pennsylvania Ave. in Downingtown.

After World War II, the Mennas, and subsequent owners of that property on West Pennsylvania Avenue, used the shed to store gardening equipment for decades, until it

was donated to the Borough several years ago. Subsequently, Ginny Pierce of the borough's Parks and Historical Commission persuaded Jack Law, Downingtown Public Works director, to fix up the shed. Now, the spiffy-looking shed is located at Marinelli Park on Chestnut Street.

However, we need more info on the Trestle Bridge shed and the volunteers who guarded the site. What other Downingtown area residents were involved? Was it an all-volunteer operation, or were military personnel also involved? And what about the tent, which allegedly was used at the site?

Please send your answers to: Info@downingtowntareahistoricalsociety.org.

No one recognized Krauser's Bridge in Upper Uwchlan



The "Where and What Is This" photo (taken by Mike Dunn) in last week's Hist-O-Gram is of Krauser's Bridge, which is also known as Styer Road Bridge. It spans Marsh Creek, which feeds into the lake at Marsh Creek State Park, in Upper Uwchlan Township. Built in 1905, it's one of the best preserved examples of Chester County's arch bridges.

Although bridges with brick arches were not popular in Pennsylvania, there are more in Chester County than other parts of the state, according to the state's Historic Bridge Inventory, www.historicbridges.org/bridges/browser/?bridgebrowser=pennsylvania/chester131krausers/.

"They were built under the supervision of Chester County engineer Nathan R. Rambo, who favored masonry arches at a time when other county engineers were turning to reinforced concrete. The choice of brick arch bridges reflected as much a desire to build a bridge type that required little in the way of formal engineering design or calculations, as it did an aesthetic decision. The handsome brick arch bridges offered low maintenance costs and permanency," noted the Inventory.

Clip Joint will be open Sunday, April 7

The next clipping and pasting session will be held from 1-4 PM on **Sunday, April 7** at Ashbridge House, our headquarters on East Lancaster Avenue, in the Ashbridge Shopping Center in East Caln. Parking is available in the lot at the Chick-Fil-A restaurant next door, which is closed on Sundays. You're welcome to arrive and leave at your leisure

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.

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 April 16 and May 14.

Please check out the P3 website: 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, 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 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.

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@downingtowndareahistoricalociety.org.