



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 & Heating, to be used at a local restaurant.

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

Much of local news focused on schools

Many of the stories about the Downingtown area, published in local newspapers in early March 1961, focused on the school system. The articles included:

Janet Strawsnyder and Janine Davis represented Downingtown Junior HS in a **public speaking contest**, sponsored by the Chester County PTA.

DHS students Carmella Baxter, John Rogers, Thomas Yerkes, and Neil Shields made the **Southeastern District Chorus**, comprised of singers from high schools in Chester, Delaware and Philadelphia Counties.

First place winners in the Downingtown School District's second annual **Industrial and Science Fair** were David Lord, DSrHS; Harry Simms, DJrHS; and Jeff Kohlas, elementary schools.

The Downingtown Joint High School Board heard a report on how DJrHS compared to the 237 junior high schools in 23 states recently **surveyed by Harvard's Dr. James Conant**. Thomas Stoner, principal, said DJrHS doesn't offer algebra or a foreign language in the junior high curriculum, as recommended by Conant. However, Stoner noted that the local school's students devoted 71 percent of their time in school to academic efforts, which was slightly more than the surveyed schools did. And homework for Downingtown pupils slightly exceeded the Conant report's standards.

Although top Whippet scorer Tom Yerkes couldn't play because of a torn leg ligament, the DHS boys' basketball team earned a shot at winning the **District I Class B championship** when Charlie Newlin banked in a last-second shot to beat Kennett Square 61-59. But dreams of a district title were shattered when Media beat DHS 71-41, despite Sam Westmoreland's 18-point effort.

Other Downingtown area news 52 years ago included:

Gene DiSantis bought the 150-year-old **Swan Hotel** and planned to re-open the Downingtown landmark on April 1.

Lionville Cub Scouts who won Genius Kit awards at the pack's Blue and Gold banquet were: Danny Hayes, Harry Wright and Ralph Hill, most ingenious; Tommy Isinger and David Grubb, best workmanship; Richard Faddis and Buddy Roach, most useful; Keith Lambert and Rickey Gilbert, most decorative; Tony McQuail and Tommy McCurdy, funniest.

Upper Uwchlan residents selected to run on the Republican ticket in the spring primary were Doris Pierson, inspector of election; Allen Dewees, township supervisor; Ruth Jackson and Rev. Carl Kopenhaver, school director; and Guyon Mercer, assessor; and Janet Garvine, tax collector.

Models for the **Ladies of St. Joseph** fashion show were Mrs. John Belnomi, Mrs. David Bradford, Mrs. Gene DiSantis, Mrs. Charles Snyder, Mrs. Penn Garnett, Mrs. A.N. Cippolini, Mrs. Frederick Travaglini, Mrs. William Crawford and Mrs. John DiBernardi.

And those who modeled clothes from Leta's Dress Shop, Downingtown, in the fashion show sponsored by the **Auxiliary of the East Brandywine Fire Co.** were Mrs. Donald Bower, Mrs. Maurice Moses, Mrs. Charles Hilton, Mrs. Vernon Jameson, Mrs. Frank Swarner, Mrs. Jean Laird, Nancy Gindin, Barbara Thompson, Beverly Laird and Mrs. Michael Filoromo.

Clip Joint won't be open March 3

Volunteers usually come to Ashbridge House, on Route 30 in East Caln, on the first Sunday of each month to clip and paste newspaper articles. However, there won't be a clipping and pasting session on the afternoon of Sunday, March 3 because there will be another function at our 304-year-old headquarters that afternoon. The next clipping and pasting get-together will be held from 1-4 PM Sunday, April 7. Hope to see you then.

It's in Marinelli Park, but what is it?



Many Hist-O-Gram subscribers correctly recognized that the shed pictured above (taken by Mike Dunn) is located in Marinelli Park in Downingtown. However, we're still unsure about the history of the shed. So, it's impossible to determine a winner in last week's competition.

Many people believe the shed had been used by those who guarded the Pennsylvania Railroad's Trestle Bridge, along the Downingtown-West Bradford border, during World War II. And several people claim the bridge was protected from saboteurs by military personnel, and not local volunteers. Guarding the bridge was critical at the time because so many of the Pennsy's freight trains carried military supplies.

But some people think the shed in Marinelli Park was used by volunteer plane spotters, who were part of the Aircraft Warning System during World War II. Spotters were trained to identify and record sightings of planes flying overhead. To identify enemy planes, some of the spotters used aircraft silhouette cards, which are shown in www.ameshistoricalsociety.org/exhibits/events/aircraft_spotting_cards.htm.

Ginny Pierce recalls that when she and Eddie Aumiller were youngsters, they visited the spotter's site, under the guidance of Eddie's father, George Aumiller, a volunteer spotter. The

site they saw was located in the middle of a corn field on the Hannum farm, now owned by the Mattioni family, on the east side of Uwchlan Avenue (Route 113) in the borough. That's the only aircraft observation post in the Downingtown area we've heard about, so far. Let us know if you know about other spotting sites in the area.

Please send your comments, insights, reactions, etc. on how the shed was used to: Info@downingtowntareahistoricalociety.org.

Where is Marinelli Park?

According to the borough's website—www.downingtowntown.org—Marinelli Park was formally dedicated on Saturday November 13, 2004. It is located on Lincoln Avenue at the site of an abandoned parking lot acquired by the Borough as part of the Main Street Village development. The development is located on the site that was previously occupied by the O'Brien complex, located along Green St. and Washington Ave. That property had housed the Beloit Corporation's "Eastern" division, and prior to that, was known as Downingtown Manufacturing Co. In the late 1950's, employment at the then "Beloit Eastern" plant had grown so large that a parking lot was constructed along Lincoln Ave. Over time, the parking lot filled with silt from the constant flooding from the Little Park Run tributary. Soon, both the parking lot and the industrial site were abandoned and became terrible eyesores.

The Downingtown Main Street Association secured grants from the state to demolish and clean up this old industrial site. An agreement was reached between property owner Gary Silversmith, of Downingtown, and the Main Street Village developer, S & S Development Corporation, whereby the former parking lot would be turned over to the Borough to be used as parkland.

Downingtowntown Borough secured a Growing Greener Grant from the state, providing funds for storm water management, returning the stream bed to its original condition, and educational purposes.

Why Marinelli Park?

In the spring of 2001, the Borough of Downingtown named a 4.2-acre parcel of land on Lincoln Avenue "Marinelli Park," to honor two brothers, Dominic and James Marinelli, who died in World War II. The Marinelli family lived in the immediate neighborhood.

During World War II, almost everyone was involved in the war effort. Many served, and some gave their all, but few experienced the loss sustained by the Marinelli family. Mrs. Flavia Marinelli's brother, Tony Duca (U.S. Army Air Corps), was killed in action on February 14, 1944. On October 8, 1944, her elder son, James Marinelli (U.S. Army) was killed in northern Italy. By the spring of 1945, the war in Europe was nearing conclusion, and the family pinned its hopes on the safe return of the younger son, Dominic (U.S. Marine Corps), who was stationed in the Pacific. Sadly, Dominic Marinelli was killed on the island of Okinawa on April 14, 1945.

Lore has it, the family dogs howled on the evenings the brothers died. The Marinelli family never totally recovered from their loss.

In our small community, over one thousand young men and a few women were in the service during World War II. Eighteen from Downingtown and another six from the surrounding townships gave their lives during the war. The names of all these servicemen

are listed on the Downingtown Area Veterans Memorial at Kerr Park. You may visit the Veterans Memorial site at www.dvmf.org.

Coming events & activities in Downingtown area

GEYA registration

Glenmoore Eagle Youth Association offers recreational soccer programs for kids from Pre-K through 12th grade, with no residency restrictions. Registration is open until February 28, with late registration open until March 15. Go to www.geyasoccer.org to register.

GEYA also offers the HIGH 5 Soccer Program for young athletes (5-19) with special needs. The program is designed to improve the overall fitness, self-esteem and social skills of each child. Registration is always open for HIGH 5 Soccer and there is no cost to participants. You can register now for the spring season, which begins in April, at www.geyasoccer.org.

GEYA is always looking for high school students to help out as "buddies" for the HIGH 5 soccer program. This service can count towards a high school graduation project. Contact Bill LaTorre at BillL@geyasoccer.org for more information.

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.downingtowntalumni.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 March 19, 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@downingtownareahistoricalociety.org.