



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

Interesting local history, accessed from our archives

www.downingtownareahistoricalociety.org

Vol. 4, No. 6

February 7, 2013

Where and What Is This?



The first person to correctly identify the location and purpose of the site in this photo 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.

Originally part of a toll house? Probably not

Our January 17 Hist-O-Gram noted that the original part of the house at 4809 Horseshoe Pike, shown below, had been a toll house, which dated back to the late 1780s, according to a website about the property, www.4809horseshoepike.com.

Located on the east side of Route 322 a short distance above the Route 30 Bypass, the toll house allegedly was enveloped by the pictured building, originally constructed in 1837, and subsequently expanded and modified over the ensuing 175 years.



However, Chester County researcher Mary Dugan has determined that no part of the house ever had been a toll house. Dugan was hired by the Old Caln Historical Society in 2004 to analyze the history of the house.

Dugan reached that conclusion after she found a notice, published in the October 6, 1909 edition of the *Coatesville Record*, that “the little, old toll-gate house on the Horseshoe Pike,” was to be razed.

She also noted that Jane Davidson, former Chester County Historic Preservation officer and author of *A History of Downingtown*, was “convinced” that the toll house had been demolished and had not been incorporated into the house.

Dugan’s report on the property provides these interesting facts:

- The turnpike, officially known as the Downingtown, Ephrata and Harrisburg Road, was formed in 1803. The tolls were set at “three cents for every five miles for a

horse or mule, nine cents for a two-horse conveyance, and twenty cents for a four-horse wagon. People going to church or a funeral passed free.”

- In 1899, toll collection ended when Chester County took over the Horseshoe Pike, which “was in such bad condition that users had, for some years, refused to pay tolls.”
- In 1955, Robert and Rita Dougherty bought the 1837 house. They and their growing family lived there for nearly 50 years. Deborah and Nathan Ensmenger bought the property in 2003. More details about the property, which is for sale, can be accessed at www.4809horseshoepike.com.

News in the Downingtown area 36 years ago

The news items noted below were originally published in local newspapers in February 1977.

Due to a fuel oil shortage and because temperatures had dropped to the lowest levels ever recorded in Northeastern United States, Gov. Milton Shapp declared that all schools in Pennsylvania had to **cancel all classes** and extracurricular activities, including sports, for several days.

Jim Hart was re-elected president of the **Uwchlan Ambulance Corps**. Newly-installed officers were Jean Corradi, vice president; Lois Norwood, corresponding secretary; Bob Kochie, treasurer; Don Dockstader and Cal Wilhelm, trustees; and Bill Davis, operations chief.

Members of the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee at **Downingtown Methodist Church** were Mrs. Charles Steeley, Mrs. Charles Bruton, Sara Brown, Thomas Brookover, Mrs. Thomas Bradley, William Woodward, Mrs. Robert Stevens, and Mrs. Charles Espenlaub.

Elected to lead the **Downingtown Chamber of Commerce** were Richard Herbster, first vice president; and Joseph Stauffer, second vice president. William Hildebeitel had another year as president. Newly-elected directors were Bruce Bredickas, Pat Cassaro, Anthony Rogevich and Jonathan Stott.

Paul Brown was re-elected chairman of the **East Caln Municipal Authority**. Others elected were Geraldine Ford, vice chairman; Dr. Winston, secretary; and Edward Kirkbride, treasurer.

Recent **property transfers** included: 308 Biddle Dr., Uwchlan, \$58,000; 315 David Circle, Downingtown, \$48,900; 25 Windemere Ct., E. Brandywine, \$40,900; 850 Sugars Bridge Rd., W. Bradford, \$63,000; 57 N. Woodmont Dr., E. Caln, \$54,900.

Changes in the application failed to persuade the Chester County Health Planning Committee to approve the **St. John Neumann Medical Center**, planned to be built along the Downingtown-Caln border.

Wallace Township sought an \$18,000 grant from the Chester County Redevelopment Authority to build two lighted tennis courts at Wagenseller Park

Gaudenzia House sought to open an alternative school for some 30 troubled teenagers in a Quonset hut at the corner of Green Street and Jefferson Avenue in Downingtown.

Cub Scout Pack 8, sponsored by Hopewell Methodist Church, held a sail boat regatta. Steve Leslie was the winner for Den 1, led by Robert McCarty. The winner for Den 2, led by Betty Jefferis, was Gary Jefferis. Drew Gardiner won for Den 4, led by Carol Millward. And Mickey Rusdin was the winner for Den 5, led by Nancy Frank.

Lay ministers installed at **St. Joseph's Church**, Downingtown, were John Francella, Victor Sarkissian, Nello Caporale and Albert Homan.

Donald White, who served as a teacher, coach and administrator in the school district for 40 years, was honored when **Downingtown Junior High's** new music and physical education wing was dedicated.

It was the Gindy Manufacturing Corp. headquarters



Rahn Brackin is the truly perceptive scholar who was the first caller to correctly identify this as a photo of the Gindy Manufacturing Corp. office building, at the intersection of Chestnut Street and Boot Road. Founded by David Ginsburg in 1940, Gindy's 250 employees were producing enclosed aluminum truck trailers at the East Caln site by 1965. In January 1966, however, a disastrous fire destroyed the plant, and the operation was moved to Eagle. Budd Co. acquired Gindy in 1975. And in 1985, Budd sold the business to Thayer Trailer Co., which closed in 1987.

The photo was taken by Ron Tipton in the mid-1950s, when his family lived on the second floor of the Gindy headquarters. In the ensuing years, the building in East Caln was razed, and the site now is occupied by Sunbelt Rentals.

(Editor's Note: The Historical Society is always on the lookout for printed materials and artifacts related to Gindy Manufacturing or any other Downingtown area business. If you wish to donate anything to our archival collection, please call us at 610-269-1709. Thanks.)

Coming events & activities in Downingtown area

Blood drive at Borough Hall

There will be a Red Cross Blood Drive in the Borough Hall Annex, 4 W. Lancaster Ave., Downingtown, from 2-7 PM Wednesday, February 20. Walk-ins will be accepted. For more info, call 1-800-733-2767.

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.downingtownalumni.org.

DHS West Post Prom Party

The 10th annual DHS West Post Prom Party (P3) 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 Post Prom 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 Feb. 19, 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 Downtown 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@downtownareahistoricalsociety.org.