



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

Interesting local history, accessed from our archives

www.downtowntownareahistoricalociety.org

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Where Was 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@downingtowntownareahistoricalociety.org.

Three big snow storms in early 1961 didn't deter many Downingtown area activities

The following news items were originally published in local newspapers during the last week of January and the first two weeks of February, a period in the early winter of 1961, when Chester County was hit by three major snow storms. Despite some postponements and cancellations, life continued in the Downingtown area.

The snow storms forced the **Downingtown Farmers Market** to postpone the beginning of its "More For Americans" contest. To compete each week, customers (who didn't have to buy merchandise to compete) had to collect free contest tickets from each of the market's merchants, deposit one half of each ticket in a barrel at the market, and hang on to the other half until they showed up for the drawing on Saturday night each week. Weekly Jackpot prizes included a Hotpoint dryer, a 3-piece maple living room suite, a Hotpoint washer, and a Hotpoint refrigerator. The first grand prize, to be awarded on the contest's final night was a 1961 Rambler. Other top prizes to be awarded on the last night were a 9-piece bedroom suite and an 8-piece living room suite. Bill Hart, Philadelphia TV star and resident of East Brandywine, emceed the drawings each Saturday night.

Yvette Zurburchen of Winterthur, Switzerland, was the first foreign exchange student to attend DHS in a program sponsored by the **American Field Service**. Her hosts were the Newton Thompson family of Guthriesville.

(Editor's Note: We wonder if anyone from the Downingtown area has been in contact with Ms. Zurburche, or other foreign exchange students who came to Downingtown over the years. Better yet, can any of the exchange student tell us what they've been doing over the subsequent years or provide us with their recollections of their stay here?)

The Garden Class of the **Woman's Community of Uwchlan** raised funds to improve the landscaping of the new Lionville Elementary School by conducting a tea and a "Hat Show." Members who modeled hats included: Mrs. Walter England, Mrs. Frederick Heuer, Mrs. Gilbert Smedley, Mrs. Albert Shnee, Mrs. Paul Anders, Mrs. Elroy Buttermann, Mrs. Walter Carpenter, Mrs. Garfield Smith, Mrs. William Minster and Mrs. Robert Wright.

Georgia Wagner won the spelling bee at **Downingtown Junior High**, and Mark Shrader came in second.

The **Downingtown School District** acquired a used truck for \$75, via the U.S. Defense Department's surplus property program. After the truck was towed from Fort Dix, NJ, it was reconditioned so the district's custodial and maintenance could use it.

William Wilmot, Earl Stern and Richard Keers were recognized as the **Downingtown Fire Department's** Outstanding Firemen for 1960 at the department's fifth annual banquet held at the Alert Fire Co. Fire chief Hallan Usher said the three volunteer firefighters had responded to a fire at 219 W. Lancaster Ave., where they had to crawl through dense smoke and intense heat, and break through a locked door to reach the third floor apartment where they rescued a tenant. After they resuscitated the victim, as he was being transported to the hospital in an ambulance, the men returned to the fire scene to assist in putting out the fire.

Officers elected by the congregation of **East Brandywine Baptist Church** included: Everett Henderson, Leon Faddis, Elmore Moore, Joseph McFalls and Bill Mendenhall, trustees; Edward Crane, Robert Mertz, Jesse Sanner, Asa VanLew and Howard Beale, deacons; Chris Crane and Robert Mendenhall, junior deacons; Thelma Detterline and Myrtle Reisling, deaconesses; and Joan Siever, junior deaconess.

Jack Appelby was denied a major upset in his first year of coaching the **DHS boys' basketball team** when Coatesville edged the Whippets 43-42 and clinched the first half championship of the Ches-Mont League.

The **Downingtown Opti-Mrs. Club** elected the following officers for 1961: Mrs. Joseph Poltrone, president; Mrs. Albert Burkhart, vice president; Mrs. Clair Langham, secretary; and Mrs. Clifton Walton, treasurer.

Lionville woman led school savings bank movement

The Sunday, Jan. 20, edition of the *Philadelphia Inquirer* included an article (Memory Stream, page C2) on Sara Louisa Oberholtzer, one of Lionville's most eminent citizens.

The story noted that Sara first became aware of the concept of school savings banks at the meeting of the American Economic Association in 1888. Two years later, she was appointed national superintendent of school savings bank division of the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU).

After she promoted the idea by publishing many pamphlets and editing *Thrift Tidings* magazine for 16 years, "15,000 schools had savings banks, in which, typically, each student would deposit a few pennies or more each week" by 1929. As a result, more than four million American school children had savings accounts in school-based banks, according to the *Inquirer* story.

Besides her school savings bank success, Sara realized many other accomplishments. Born in Lionville in 1841, her parents were Paxson and Ann Vickers. Several generations of the Vickers, a Quaker family known for their production of pottery used in many local households and their opposition to slavery. Her father, grandfather and great-grandfather were "stationmasters" on the Underground Railroad. Sometimes, they transported escaped slaves in the large, blue wagons used to deliver Vickers pottery, according to www.anselmamill.org/people.htm.

Sara attended the Thomas Boarding School in Lionville and Millersville State Normal School. At age 20, she married John Oberholtzer, who ran the Willowdale Mill (now the Mill at Anselma) in West Pikeland Township. In addition to caring for her family which included two sons, she managed to become a prolific poet, and many of her poems were published in the leading periodicals of the day.

John sold the mill in 1886, and the Oberholtzers moved to Norristown, where Sara became active in the WCTU. Subsequently, she was one of the speakers at the first meeting of the National Council of Women in Washington, DC, in 1890, and she spoke at the World's Conference of Women in Chicago in 1893 and in Geneva, Switzerland in 1903.

Sara died in 1930, and is buried in West Laurel Hill Cemetery in Philadelphia.

Window is part of wall at Dane Decor



When Joe Bird was a tiny fellow, many decades ago, he used to walk from his home on Washington Avenue to Downingtown Junior-Senior High School on Manor Avenue in the borough. And to make the trip shorter, little Joe usually cut through the property of Central Presbyterian Church, constructed in 1863 at 216 E. Lancaster Ave. Slim Joe is the truly perceptive scholar who was the first person to recognize that the photo above is a window in the wall, which now is part of the Dane Décor furniture store. The Hamilton family established the store shortly after Central Presbyterian's congregation moved in 1972 to a new church at 100 W. Uwchlan Avenue in Downingtown.

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 (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.

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