



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

Interesting local history, accessed from our archives

www.downingtownareahistoricalociety.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@downingtownareahistoricalociety.org.

News in the Downingtown area 52 years ago

The following news items were originally published in local newspapers in the latter part of February 1961.

Mrs. George Meacham and Mrs. Hannah Gordon were hired as **school-crossing guards** in Downingtown. Police Chief Joseph Newlin said the women eventually would be given additional police duties.

Porter and Painter, Realtors, was promoting the availability of Colonial-style homes in the Whitford Hills area for \$19,500. The homes, built by Bernie Hankin, had four bedrooms and 1.5 baths.

A Teen Baseball League for boys between 13 and 15 years of age was being formed by the **Chester Springs Athletic Association**. Michael Kean, association president, appointed the following committee chairmen: Clarence Beyer, rules; Eleanor Knox, public relations; Raymond Hamilton, grounds; Doris Miller, membership; and Harold Hallman Jr., financial.

Members of the **Ladies of St. Joseph Catholic Church**, Downingtown, who were models in a fashion show, were Mrs. David Bradford, Mrs. John Belnomi, Mrs. Gene DiSantis, Mrs. Charles Snyder, Mrs. Penn Garnett, Mrs. A.N. Cipollini, Mrs. Frederick Travaglini, Mrs. William Crawford and Mrs. John DiBernardi.

Mrs. Daniel Zittle, president of the **Ladies Auxiliary of the Alert Fire Co.**, asked members to save coupons from certain cereal boxes so they could get inexpensive tablespoons for the firehall's kitchen.

Sophia Raysor, a member of the **Lyndell Grange**, won the National Grange Poster Contest.

DHS students inducted into the **National Honor Society** were Linda Aumiller, Linda Bloom, Margaret Corey, Barbara Edwards, Frances Fitzgerald, Robert French, Judy Jones, Mary Louise LeFevre, Barbara Noll, John Rogers, Jacqueline Thomas, Virginia White and Janice Windle.

Also, the four **DHS juniors** who were selected to attend a weekend of science meetings at the Drexel Institute of Technology were Gayle Davis, Lynn Barron, Marie Pollock and Gayle Ruch. And DHS Senior James Hurtt was honored for outstanding science achievements in ceremonies held at the Union League.

Awards for their store window displays during the Downingtown Chamber of Commerce's **Boy Scout Week** were presented to Keith Burns of Cub Pack 70 and Robert Sarmiento of Boy Scout troop 82.

Dental exams were done on first and third graders in the elementary schools of East Brandywine and Wallace townships by **Dr. S. W. Dietrich**.

Bob Stevens' recollections of unusual fire

Last week's Hist-O-Gram included a news item about William Wilmot, Earl Stern and Richard Keers being named the Downingtown Fire Department's Outstanding Firemen for 1960 at the department's fifth annual banquet in 1961. 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 tried to resuscitate 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.

That story brought back memories for Bob Stevens, a member of the Alert Fire Co. for many years.

"I had just joined the fire company 10 months prior to the fire," explained Bob in an email. The Downingtown Fire Department's annual banquet in 1960 had just finished, and Bob and four of his fellow firefighters "were getting into a car to go to Dick Thomas's for some hot dogs, because we did not get enough to eat." As they were leaving the fire station, the siren started to sound and they all jumped out of the car and ran back into the station. "As I recall, the guys were Richard Keers, Jimmy Mento, Tim Mahan, Bill Dawson and I," continued Bob.

When they arrived at the site of the blaze on West Lancaster Avenue, “the fire was raging on the third floor, left side. As it turned out later, the occupant of that apartment was rescued, but died later.

“We had a number of incidents take place that night at the fire,” added Bob. “Chief Usher was standing under a ladder, giving instructions on where to put it, and it dropped on his head. I think he had a serious headache that night.”

And firefighter Bob Moore broke his leg, when he fell into the basement. Also, Tim Mahan suffered some burns, and was transported to the hospital, along with Moore.

Despite all those events,” we did put out the fire without allowing it to extend into other apartments,” recalls Bob.

“There was one good thing that came out of that particular fire,” concludes Bob. “I met my wife that night, as she lived in the adjoining apartment. The rest is history.....”

Clip Joint will be open Sunday afternoon

We’re going to have our leisurely clipping and pasting session from 1-4 PM on Sunday 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 convenience.

It was the girls' lavatory at Downingtown Junior-Senior High School



Gregg Nelms was the truly perceptive scholar who was the first person to correctly identify this as a photo of a lavatory at the Downingtown Junior-Senior High School. The photo is one of a series of shots of the school’s rooms, which were taken before it opened in 1932. Today, the building is occupied by the STEM Academy. It appears to be a girls’ lavatory, for obvious reasons.

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.downingtowntalumni.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 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@downingtowntareahistoricalociety.org