



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 the building shown above will be recognized as a truly perceptive scholar. Please send your responses to:

Info@downingtownareahistoricalociety.org.

Downingtown area news 52 years ago

Noted below are items which were originally published in local newspapers in late July 1961.

The **Downingtown Joint High School Board** rejected all seven bids for a new football stadium because they were far higher than the estimates—between \$8,600 and \$11,600, depending on contingencies—provided a month earlier. The lowest bid was \$18,039.

And Guy Kline, guidance counselor, provided a report to the School Board on the quality of the **Junior-Senior High School's education program**. Using the 126 members of the DHS Class of 1956 as a barometer, Kline said 26 graduates from that class had entered college, and 14 of them had earned a degree by 1960. Also, 51% of the members of the Class of 1961 planned to attend college

Members of the **Downingtown Lions Club**, responsible for sponsoring the Mills Brothers Circus slated to appear at the Downingtown Farmer's Market in August, included Edward Towson, Vinton Smedley, Ben Valocchi, Warren Strawsnyder, Horace

Rodgers, Edmund Cohill, Ethan Berry and Dr. Anthony Ricci, club president. Proceeds from the project were given to Handi-Crafters.

Winners of the hat show at the **Marshallton School playground** were Joe Giunta, most original; Cindy Edwards, most unusual; Villamay Osborne, prettiest; Mike Riggins, biggest; Franny Wood, most democratic; and Carl Harper, simplest, but the best.

And winners of the hobby show at the **Alert fire hall playground** were Tony Moschitta, first; Jack Swisher, second; Linda Stoner, third; Vincent Cozzone, fourth; David Hemberger, fifth; and Denine Koth, sixth.

The recently opened sports center at the **Downingtown Farmers Market** featured the first, modern trampoline in Chester County. In addition to a trained instructor, the trampoline center featured competitions for various age groups.

The **Ship Inn** on Route 30 in Exton was promoting a Businessmen's Lunch for only 90 cents. Also, baked ham and western egg sandwiches cost just 40 cents.

Members of an executive committee, established at a meeting of the **Marsh Creek Taxpayers Association**, included B. Franklin Peirson, president; Frederick Higham, vice president; J. Morris Jackson, secretary-treasurer; Col. Horace Shelmire; Richard Howell; and Howard Meroney. Jackson said the organization was willing to take their fight against the State's plans to dam the Marsh Creek and create a large lake and park facilities in Upper Uwchlan, "all the way to the State Supreme Court."

Walter Leland, Downingtown borough manager, reported that it cost each borough resident "just 52 cents a year" to maintain the 45-acre **Kerr Park**.

Playwright seeks info from June 2012 Hist-O-Grams

As we've often noted in past editions of the Hist-O-Gram, our Historical Society is much more than a 304-year-old building. In fact, we wouldn't be able to keep the Historical Society alive if we didn't constantly maintain and upgrade our archival collection, as well as our headquarters on Route 30 in East Caln.

That's why volunteers come to Ashbridge House every week to clip articles from old and current newspapers, and paste them on large index cards. The index cards—which now total more than 8,000—include articles on local businesses, schools, churches, organizations, and other institutions, as well as Family Files (i.e. weddings, graduations, obituaries, etc.).

And those news articles don't just recline in filing cabinets at Ashbridge House. People often ask us to retrieve specific articles in our archival collection, for a nominal search fee.

We recently received a query about 30 newspaper articles in our archives, which were the basis of a two-part story in Hist-O-Grams we published in June 2012. The story was about Evelyn Hoey, a singing star on Broadway who introduced classics such as "What is This Thing Called Love" and "April in Paris." The story focused on the vocalist's mysterious shooting death while she was a weekend guest at a playboy's farmhouse in Glenmoore in 1935. The request was sent by a playwright, who needs the information for a musical she is writing.

You can access that two-part story by clicking on:

www.downingtownareahistoricalandsociety.org/Histograms/June%2014%202012%20Hist-O-Gram.pdf and

www.downingtownareahistoricalandsociety.org/Histograms/June%2021%202012%20Hist-O-Gram.pdf.

It's a spring house on Shelmire Road in Uwchlan Twp.



Seth Boer was the truly perceptive scholar who was the first person to correctly identify the site of the spring house in the photo above (taken by Mike Dunn) as part of a property on Shelmire Road in Uwchlan Township.

Shelmire Road was named after Col. Horace W. Shelmire (1886-1965), who bought a large property, then known as Old Forge Farm, located on that road in 1931. Since Col. Shelmire had served in the military during World War I and was in his mid-50s when WW II started, he was turned down when he volunteered to join the Army again, according to an article in the June 3 edition of *The Archive*, a Downingtown weekly newspaper.

That rejection stung Shelmire because at least one member of his family had fought in every war the United States had been involved in. In fact, his great-grandfather, Capt. John Shelmire, was an aide to Gen. Washington at the Battle of the Brandywine.

However, Shelmire's disappointment didn't last long, because Gen. "Hap" Arnold, commander of the Army Air Force and Shelmire's classmate at Lower Merion High School, asked him to come to Washington to be his chief aide.

But Shelmire didn't spend much time in Washington as a Pentagon desk jockey. Instead, after earning his wings, his assignments included North Africa and 18 months as commander of a B-29 Group on the island of Saipan, where he was responsible for building an air field. Ironically, Shelmire closely resembled Lt. Col Nicholson, portrayed by Alec Guinness in the Oscar-winning 1957 film *Bridge On the River Kwai*.

Also as a commander on Saipan, Shelmire earned a Legion of Merit medal for his personal involvement in the disposal of dangerous dud bombs. During the 1950s, he was head of the Civil Defense efforts in Chester County.

Events and Activities in the Downingtown Area

Concerts in the Park Series

The concert series continues in Kerr Park, Downingtown, on Sunday, July 21, when Midnight Social plays from 5 PM - 7 PM. More information is available at:

www.downingtowntownconcerts.com

Red Cross Blood Drive

The blood drive will be conducted from 2 PM – 7 PM Wednesday, July 31 in the Annex Building, behind Borough Hall, 4 W. Lancaster Ave., Downingtown. Here's a link to more information and registration: [Downingtowntown Borough Blood Drive](#)

Downingtowntown Concerts in the Park Series

The concert series continues in Kerr Park on Sunday, July 21 when Midnight Social plays from 5 PM–7 PM. More information is available at:

www.downingtowntownconcerts.com

Lions Club Golf Outing

Downingtowntown/Lionville Lions Clubs will have a golf outing on Monday, August 19 at the Downingtown Country Club, to raise funds for the Lords Pantry, Downingtown Area Senior Center and The Chester County Association for the Blind. For more information, contact Herb Mays (610-389-3747) or Don Greenleaf (484-354-2273).

Downingtowntown Farmers Market

The Downingtown Farmers Market at Kerr Park is open from 3-7 PM every Thursday. All of the farmers and food artisans at the market must grow, raise or make what they sell – meriting its classification as a "producer only" market.

The market will also feature weekly musical guests and activities for children. Consistent with the market's social mission, food drives will be held periodically to benefit the Lord's Pantry and other organizations in need of food donations. Additionally, market space will be made available to non-profit groups if their mission is similar to that of the market.

There is plenty of parking in the Kerr Park lots, as well as in the Borough Hall parking lot.

Savings opportunities available at DARC

Discount Movie Tickets: \$8, 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, contact us at:

Info@downtownareahistoricalociety.org