



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

*Interesting local history, accessed from our archives*

[www.downingtownareahistoricalociety.org](http://www.downingtownareahistoricalociety.org)

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# Where and What Is This?



The first person to correctly identify the site in this photo will be recognized as a truly perceptive scholar. Please send your identification entries to:

[Info@downingtownareahistoricalociety.org](mailto:Info@downingtownareahistoricalociety.org).

### Local news in November 1945

## **Borough voters nixed Sunday movies**

The following items were published in Downingtown area newspapers 68 years ago:

Downingtown's four precincts split their vote when they participated in a referendum on whether to allow **Sunday movies** in the borough. Residents who lived in the West Ward, North Precinct, overwhelmingly (264 No vs. 106 Yes) voted against the proposal. However, the West Enders in the South Precinct (Johnsontown section of the borough)

avored movie-going on Sundays by a 93-25 margin. Voting in the East Ward was closer, with the East/East Precinct residents supporting (166 Yes vs. 102 No) Sunday movies, while the voting in the East/West Precinct was close (101 Yes vs. 105 No). West Chester residents also voted against Sunday movies.

And only those movie-goers who had purchased a **victory bond** had an opportunity to see Bing Crosby and Betty Hutton in two special showings of “Duffy’s Tavern” at the Roosevelt Theatre in Downingtown.

East Brandywine residents formed a committee to determine the best way to **create memorial** honoring the township citizens who had served in the military in World War II. The committee decided that the memorial should be of a benefit to the township residents, and not a monument or plaque. However, the memorial would include a listing of names of those who served in the war. Early suggestions included planting of memorial trees and establishment of a local fire department.

Leaders of the committee included Lester Piersol, president; C.H. Congdon, vice president; W.H. Marshall, treasurer; and Lillian Peters, secretary. The committee’s commissioners were Mrs. Wallace Pearson, Mrs. Henry Stewart, Clarence Cook, Everett Henderson, Charles Ezra, Arthur Lowery, James Manley, Dr. J.H.N. Waring, Robert Piersol and Thomas Hadfield.

The Chester County Library’s bright red **bookmobile** began making monthly visits to Glenmoore. The bookmobile, which transported 300 books, was parked in front of Ben Hannum’s house in the center of the village.

The DHS football team kicked off a series of annual **Thanksgiving morning games** against Pottstown by tying the Trojans in a come-from-behind thriller. Down 13-0 late in the game, Ray Barrow sprinted 14 yards for the Whippets’ first TD. And Dick Dague knotted the score, when he intercepted a pass and then scored on a three-yard plunge near the end of the hard-fought contest.

Prior to the **Senior Class play**, DHS student pianists Helen Windle and Joyce Hesser played several numbers, and vocalists Nancy Jones and Ruth Hicks sang popular songs.

Prize winners in the costume competition at the Halloween Party for students of **Upper Uwchlan’s four elementary schools**—Eagle, Font, Prospect and Montrose—were Bruce Loud, Nancy and Wanda Martin, Barbara Powell, Sara and Martha Funderwhite, Charlotte Lammey, Leroy Trego, Alice Styer, Christine Roberts, Betty Seeds, and Gene Edwards.

And **Lionville Primary School** students who won prizes for their costumes at their Halloween party were Kathleen Levensgood, Thomas Fisher, Mary Drennan and Walter Trego.

Officers elected to lead the **Marshallton Grange** included Harry Perdue, master; Gilbert Gray, overseer; Esther Hill, lecturer; John Romig, steward; George Murphy, assistant steward; Albert Anderson, treasurer; Mary Gibson, chaplain; and Alice Shoemaker, treasurer.

## **John Wannamaker used to summer in Glenmoore**

Glenmoore historian John Miller informed us that John Wannamaker, the department store mogul, had a summer place in Wallace Township in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Miller says Wannamaker bought the large John Patterson estate, which now is part of the Devereux Foundation School complex in Wallace Township, in 1888. Wannamaker

already had a successful clothing business in Philadelphia by then, but he didn't establish America's first, modern department store in Center City until 1910.

In 1890, Wanamaker built a summer home, known as Glen Cairn, on the former Patterson estate on Devereux Road. He often commuted to Philadelphia by taking the Downingtown and Lancaster Railroad from the Cornog station in Wallace Township, and then caught the Pennsylvania Railroad train at the Downingtown station.

Interestingly, Wanamaker had commissioned Patterson, an artist, in 1883 to design and paint the walls of his clothing store at 13<sup>th</sup> and Chestnut Streets in Philadelphia.

Wanamaker also donated a bell to Fairview Presbyterian Church in Glenmoore for its new spire in 1871.

## **Plane spotting tower was located at McIlvaine farm**

We learned about another local plane spotting operation during World War II, when Paul DiFonzo recently told us that he used to walk from his home on Jefferson Avenue in Downingtown to be a volunteer plane spotter, operating from a tower on the McIlvaine farm. The tower was near the northeast corner of the intersection of Whitford Road and Route 30 in the Exton area.

Dick McIlvaine, whose family owned the farm, explained to us in a telephone interview that they had a huge, three-story coop, which housed some 12,000 chickens during the WW II era. Today, the Salon DeSante beauty salon is located near where the coop was situated back then, and the plane spotting tower was behind the coop. Dick said he and his brothers, who were school-age kids at the time, all took turns as spotters.

Joe Puliti told us in an email that his brother, Larry Polite, who owned The Guernsey Cow, volunteered as an aircraft spotter at the McIlvaine farm. He says. "Larry often could not make his appointed time, so he had me fill in for him. As far as I can remember, there was a crudely built tower on the farm and the shifts were for four hours, 24/7. We were issued binoculars and had to record every air craft that flew in our space; the type of aircraft; and the direction it was flying. I was expecting to spot bombers and fighters, but the only planes I spotted were Piper Cubs and other small aircraft. Needless to say, it was a very boring assignment."

For more information on airplane spotters during World War II, click on: <http://askville.amazon.com/organizational-structure-WWII-airplane-spotters-network/AnswerViewer.do?requestId=11146950>

## **Hist-O-Grams available on DHS Alumni Assn. website**

Tell your friends and family that they can always access the latest (as well as past editions) Hist-O-Grams by going to the DHS Alumni Association's website: [www.downingtownalumni.org/](http://www.downingtownalumni.org/). You can thank our webmaster, Val DiLuigi, a DHS alumna, for providing us with that opportunity.

## Plaque honors Collins & Aikman employees who served in WW II



Dan Lindley was the truly perceptive scholar who was the first person to correctly identify this photo (provided by Mike Dunn) as the memorial honoring Collins and Aikman employees who served in the military during World War II. The veterans' memorial, erected in 1946, is on the mill property along Bondsville Road in East Brandywine. The mill was known to locals as the "plush mill" when Collins and Aikman produced upholstery fabric for the automobile seats in the 1930s.

During World War II, 300 employees produced lining fabric for Air Force jackets, and foam rubber backing for carpeting was manufactured in the early 1950s. When Collins and Aikman shut down the mill in 1954, 135 people lost their jobs. Subsequently, several other owners used the property, until it was permanently closed in 1969.

The mill was named for Abraham Bond, who built a water-powered facility in 1841, to produce twilled cotton material used to make trousers, known as "Kentucky jeans." Subsequently, the mill was owned by the James Roberts family from 1866 until 1872, when it was bought by Fred Pearson. In addition to the mill, Pearson's purchase also included the 40 workers' houses and the owner's 18-room mansion. The Pearson family sold the mill to Collins and Aikman in 1932.

In 2004, East Brandywine Township purchased the 25-acre site, and established the Bondsville Mill committee two years later. The committee is developing plans for a passive park there, to include re-use and preservation of the historic mill complex's dilapidated buildings.

For more detailed information on the Bondsville Mill project, click on:

<http://www.ebrandywine.org/Bondsville%20Mill%20Park/Master%20Site%20Plan%20Report%20for%20Bondsville%20Mill%20Park.pdf>

## **Events & activities in the Downingtown area**

### ***Mac-n-Cheese Cook-off***

The second annual Cook-off will be held, rain or shine, at noon Sunday, June 9 at Kerr Park in Downingtown. Hosted by the Downingtown-Thorndale Rotary Club, the cook-off will have local restaurants, businesses, organizations and hometown cooks competing against each other for the title "BEST Mac-n-Cheese in Chester County." Admission is \$10 per person, enabling people to sample each participating group's dish.

### ***Downingtown Farmers Market***

The Downingtown Farmers Market at Kerr Park is open from 3-7 PM every Thursday. All 25 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.

Offerings include: local fruits and vegetables; pasture raised meats (beef, pork, lamb, veal) and poultry, fresh eggs; dairy products, including cheeses; whole grain breads and other baked goods; handmade pasta and sauce; honey and maple syrup; small-batch frozen desserts; artisan chocolates; hummus and salsa; jams and jellies; roasted coffee and hand-blended teas; fresh ground nut butters; field grown flowers; handmade soap; and doggie treats.

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](http://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](http://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](mailto:JPCheryl@verizon.net).

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**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](mailto:Info@downingtowntareahistoricalociety.org)**