



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

Interesting local history, accessed from our archives

www.downingtownareahistoricalociety.org

Vol. 5, No. 4

January 23, 2014

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.

Interesting local news 52 years ago

Noted below are news items, which were originally published in local newspapers in the latter part of February 1962.

Fourth graders, taught by Emily Lewis at **East Ward School**, participated in an assembly program. Those who did nursery rhyme charades were Bobby and Dennis Willis, Dorothy Conner, Brenda and Linda Henderson, Karen Bailey, Paul Jones and John Miller. And Billy Fillman, Phyllis Deets, Romanita Rodriguez and Margaret Cortlessa recited poetry.

Models in the **Downingtown Junior Woman's Club** fashion show were Linda Benson, Ann Gee, Mary Jean Lillard, Mrs. Philip Manno, Mrs. Joseph Mento, Mrs. Peter Riegel, Mrs. Albert Skiles, Mrs. Mervin Thomas, Mrs. Richard Weaver, Mrs. Edwin Johnson and Mrs. Charles Huber.

Members of **Cub Pack 83**, Lionville, who sold at least \$30 worth of light bulbs, were John Henssler, Ricky Gilbert, Richard Faddis, Dan Hayes, Kevin Miller, Barry Lambert, Lonnie Spence, Billy Braden, Harold Trego and Tony McQuail.

New trustees at **Fairview Presbyterian Church**, Glenmoore, were Harold Hannum and Robert Shoemaker. And elders elected by the congregation were Richard Clemmer, Kenneth Comstock and Edward Irwin.

Several of the younger members of the **West Bradford Fire Co.** turned the firehouse basement into a recreation room, which included installation of a shuffleboard court. The auxiliary contributed \$200 to the project.

Among the major projects considered by Downingtown's Borough Council was the use of the **Bicking Paper Co. property** as a temporary landfill.

Although the **DHS boys' basketball team** rallied from a first quarter 17-9 deficit and got as close as 29-28 in the third quarter, the Whippets lost to West Chester 69-51.

Elected officers of the Teener Sunday School at **First Baptist Church**, Downingtown, were: Gilbert Cox Jr., president; Joy Emery, vice president; Janet Hamilton, secretary; and Thomas Haas, treasurer. Mrs. John Frazer was the class teacher.

Members of the Art Service Club at **Downingtown Junior High** were Daniel Yost, Debbie Hutchison, Donald Bassett, David Emberger, Ronald Moore, Althea Boggs and Gordon Mazza.

Members of **Boy Scout Troop 82** spent a cold weekend at Camp Horseshoe were Frank, Pete and Jim Duca, Robert Menna, John March, Richard Stine, Richard Smith and Leslie Pyle.

Officers of the **Downingtown-Chester Valley Community Chest** were Stanley Walters, president; Mrs. Walter Roehrs Jr., Ralph Ralston and Paul Kraus, vice presidents; Mrs. Gilbert Hamm, secretary; Charles Seibert, treasurer; and Mr. and Mrs. Ed Campbell, executive director and executive secretary, respectively.

The **Exton Diner**, located at the intersection of Routes 100 and 30, was offering an 8-ounce steak, plus French fries and a salad, on Tuesdays and Thursdays, for only \$1.

The Downingtown Chamber of Commerce endorsed a proposed **shopping center** in the borough's business district. However, three of the owners of properties within the 5.5-acre tract where the planned center is to be built were not interested in selling at the prices offered. Also, shopping centers were being considered along Route 30 in East Caln and Thorndale.

Members of **Pack 8**, East Brandywine, who received Cub Scouting's highest award, The Arrow of Light, were Alex Androwick, Mike Alexander, Jerry Eachus, Ken Shaw and John McGirk.

More info on Underground Railroad tunnels on East Lancaster Avenue

Ever since Stuart Meisel provided information in the Jan. 9 Hist-O-Gram (<http://www.downingtowntareahistoricalociety.org/Histograms/2014%20Hist-O-Grams/January%209%202014.pdf>) about his family's home, across from the Downingtown Library, we've received suggestions about other houses on East Lancaster Avenue in the borough, which may have had tunnels, as part of the Underground Railroad, connected to their basements.

One of the suggestions came from former East Lancaster Avenue resident Stan Landis, now a retired educator who lives in Lehigh County. Stan suggested that we contact Robert "Bo" Fidler, of Chester Springs, who grew up at 435 E. Lancaster Ave. Here's most of the information that Bo recalls about a tunnel connected to his home:

Our family moved to 435 E. Lancaster Ave., a circa 1800 home, in 1949. It did not take long for the imaginations of Bo and his siblings (aged 6, 9 and 11 years old at the time) to conjure up untold horrors situated under a wooden trapdoor located in the cellar's dirt floor. We moved the cartons, cans, and etc. piled on top of the trapdoor, which was about 8 feet long. When the trapdoor was opened, we discovered stone steps leading down to a large oak door, which, if I recall correctly, had a small forged latch. And when they opened the door, they found a room that was about 14 feet long, 8 feet wide, and slightly over 6 feet high, with white-washed walls and a dirt floor.

As it turns out, there were no dead bodies, zombies or hideous apparitions in the room under the cellar of our house, but it seemed to be more than a root cellar our parents suspected it was. The amount of time it probably took for someone to build and plaster the stone walls, the size of the room and the possibility of an outline of a tunnel at the far end, may be telling. But of most significance was what we believed to be a "breathing hole" in the ceiling, which upon investigation was covered by a wooden apparatus in the cellar above, which was what one might find covering an outside chimney.

All of which means, tales about East Lancaster Avenue's tunnel mysteries continue.

Restaurant Raffle winners enjoyed dinner at Kimberton Inn

Karen and Ron Meacham won the grand prize—dinners at 12 Downingtown area restaurants—in the Restaurant Raffle, conducted by the Historical Society this past fall.

And the Meachams have offered to provide our readers with a write-up on their experiences as they visit the participating restaurants. Here's what they had to say about their meal at the Kimberton Inn:

On Thanksgiving 2013, we used one of our prize winning gift certificates and dined at The Kimberton Inn, a historic Inn built in 1796, in the Quaker community of Kimberton. The ambiance was charming and cozy, with several burning fireplaces and elegant Christmas decorations. The Thanksgiving menu was varied, in addition to the traditional Turkey entrée. All courses were finely prepared and delicious. We especially enjoyed the prime rib and baked salmon. Service was efficient and non-intrusive.

Owner Jeff Effgen stopped by our table to congratulate us on winning the Raffle, concluding a very enjoyable evening on a special holiday. The Kimbeton Inn serves guests from the small intimate party to large affairs and weddings. Having experienced both, we rate it as one of our favorites and we thank them for their gracious donation to the Downingtown Area Historical Society's fundraising event.

Don't throw those old t-shirts away

Got a bunch of t-shirts cluttering up your dresser drawers? We're interested in adding to our archives those t-shirts that have printing and artwork on them, promoting a Downtowner area business, church, school, team or organization.

And they don't have to be spotless; we'll run through a clothes washer before we put them on display. However, if any of them are full of holes, maybe you should keep and use them when you're washing your car.

So, instead of tossing your old t-shirts, please donate them to the Historical Society. Just call us at 610-269-1709 or send us an email to Info@downtownerareahistoricalociety.org, so you can arrange to donate the materials to us.

It's at 1401 Marshallton-Thorndale Road in West Bradford



Rahn Brackin is a truly perceptive scholar because he was the first person to correctly identify this as the house at 1401 Marshallton-Thorndale Road in West Bradford. The house was owned for many years by Mr. and Mrs. Parke Book. Mrs. Book had been a teacher at Caln Elementary School. The house is a Sears mail-order house. For more details on the mail-order houses see: www.searsarchives.com/homes/images/1927-1932/1928_p3218.jpg.

Your friends and family can be Hist-O-Gram subscribers

Tired of forwarding copies of each week's Hist-O-Gram to friends and family? If you want any of them to become a subscriber to our free Hist-O-Grams, tell them to go to our website: www.downingtownareahistoricalociety.org, and type their email address into the sign-up box on the home page. We won't share or sell any email addresses. Or if you want your email address deleted from the list, contact us at: Info@downingtownareahistoricalociety.org.
By the way, you can access previously published Hist-O-Grams at: www.downingtownareahistoricalociety.org/Histograms.html.

Paid ads for businesses

Vance Usher, Registered Representative

Providing a courtesy financial advisory service whose objective is to create a portfolio of:

1) Investment Grade Bonds - To achieve preservation of principal, and a stream of monthly income, to meet your budgeted living expenses.

2) Equities - To achieve market growth, and increase financial wealth, by exceeding the rate of inflation. Contact: vance_usher@netzero.com, 610-329-1056, 320 E. Lancaster Ave., Downingtown, PA 19335.

Free ads for Non-Profits

Red Cross Blood Drive

The Borough of Downingtown will host a Red Cross Blood Drive on Tuesday, February 4 from 2 PM to 7 Pm in the Downingtown Borough Hall Annex Building, at 4 W. Lancaster Ave. Use the borough's website, www.downingtown.org, to sign up to donate blood.

Food Fight

The Thorndale Rotary Club has challenged the Coatesville Rotary Club to a food fight. The clubs are competing to collect the most non-perishable food goods through March 1. All donations can be delivered to the West Bradford Township Building, 1385 Campus Drive, during normal business hours, 7 AM to 4:30 PM, Monday through Friday.

All items collected will be delivered to the Chester County Food Bank, to benefit families in need throughout our local communities.

The Cupboard's food supply runs low every March. Your generosity will help feed hundreds of hungry families during this critical time of year.

These high-priority items that are always in short supply: canned tuna, macaroni and cheese, canned pasta, canned beef stew, chili and soups, canned fruits & vegetables, and cold and hot breakfast cereals. Please consider adding an extra item or two to your weekly shopping list.

Brochure on DARC classes & activities

You can gain access to the latest DARC brochure, listing all classes and activities, at: www.darcinfo.com. For more info, call 610-269-9260, or stop by the DARC Office (8:30 AM-4:30 PM, Monday thru Friday), 114 Bell Tavern Road Downingtown.

Downingtown Farmers' Market

The Downingtown Farmers' Market will be open over the winter months on the following Thursdays: Feb. 6 and 20, March 6 and 20, and April 3 and 17, at the Williamson Masonic Hall; 210 Manor Ave., Downingtown, from 4 - 6 PM. 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.

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.

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