



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

*Interesting local history, accessed from our archives*

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

Vol. 5, No. 5

January 30, 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](mailto:Info@downingtownareahistoricalociety.org).

## Local news originally published in September 1946

News items noted below were retrieved from local newspapers published 68 years ago.

**Joseph Jefferis Jr.**, a substitute lineman on the DHS football team, died from a kidney injury he suffered at a practice session. Initially, Jefferis responded satisfactorily to early treatment, and went home and ate dinner after practice.

After he began to feel a lot of pain several days later however, he was taken to Chester County Hospital by ambulance and underwent emergency surgery, but the seriousness of the injury proved to be fatal. DHS students were told of Jefferis's death at a special assembly. His death was the first football fatality in Chester County in many years. Classmates who served as pall bearers were Mylin Logan, Raymond

Kipp, Joseph Doran, Jack Fleck, Alfonso Doto, Andrew Mueller, Joseph Hemphill and Vernon Jameson. Following a report by Dr. Herman Kramm, team doctor, the Downingtown School Board decided the football team should continue to follow its schedule for the season.

The Philadelphia Catholic Archdiocese bought "Lowebrook," the palatial estate at 151 Woodbine Road in East Caln, which had been the home of the late Gibson McIlvain. The property had been listed at \$125,000.

Now known as the **St. John Vianney Center**, the facility is the oldest running behavioral health facility in North America for priests and nuns. The mansion, built in 1917, had 29 rooms. The estate also included a large garage with living quarters overhead, a barn for hunting horses, a large dairy barn, two greenhouses and a conservatory. The dairy farm had been operated for many years by Frank Smedley, and that arrangement continued under the new owners.

The student body of the **Font School** in Upper Uwchlan, taught by Elizabeth Wanner, was comprised of eleven girls and six boys.

Members of the **Thorndale Sportsman's Club** had a Sunday afternoon shoot on the club grounds in Bondsville.

Entrepreneurs in **Marshallton** were DiMatteo and Busby, a new house and barn painting business, and Clarence Wallace, who took over the Marshallton Garage.

Elected as officers of the **Harmony Hill School** reunion committee were: Bertha Winter, president; Florence Stein Supplee, vice president; Agnes Taylor, secretary; and Margaret Balentine, treasurer. Members of the executive committee included: James McFarland, Oscar Darlington, Mrs. George Mercer, Jasper Thomas and Stella Balentine.

Members of the Downingtown branch of the **Women's Christian Temperance Union** re-elected the following officers: Mrs. Harry Brown, president; Mrs. Edwin Wagner, vice president; Mrs. Leonard Maust, secretary; and Mrs. Lemon Habecker, treasurer.

Norman Jenkins, Bobby Pringle, Jimmy Barnett and Richard Ruth were new first graders at **Lionville Elementary School**. And three newcomers to higher grades at the school were Robert Ross, Robert Spies and Robert Peoples.

Elected to lead the **American Legion Auxiliary** in Downingtown were Mrs. Leroy Helms, president; Mrs. Paul Dague, first vice president; Mrs. Earl Thornton, second vice president; Mrs. John Fisher, treasurer; and Esther Williams, secretary.

Officers of the Youth Fellowship group at **Marshallton Methodist Church** were Doris McCarter, president; Edith Martin, vice president; Betty Keehn, secretary; Mabel Sellers, treasurer; and Mary Ciaffoni, program chairman.

Officers of the Philathea Class at **St. Paul's UCC Church**, Lionville, were Mrs. Ernest Rodney, president; Mrs. Norman Davis, vice president; Mrs. Schuyler Rennard, secretary; and Mrs. Heber Wilson, treasurer.

The Mothers Club at **Indiantown School**, Glenmoore, elected the following officers: Mrs. Larne Williamson, president; Mrs. Rodney Ray, vice president; Mrs. William Rigg, secretary; and Mrs. Ward Aaron, treasurer.

Members of **Girl Scout Troop 10**, Marshallton, who earned badges were Lee Ashby, Jo-Ann LeFevre, Doris Cann, Peggy and Frances DiMatteo, Anna Hubbard, Shirley Lamborn, Mary Jane Place, Virginia English, Lilly Anne Gyger, Jean Thompson, Edith Albertson, Joyce Powell and Mary Wickersham.

## **Parke Book established airport in West Bradford in 1954**

Jack Hines, retired manager of West Bradford Township, provided us with more information about Parke and Mary Book, and Mary's sister, Dorothy Bane, all of whom lived in the Sears mail-order house, at the intersection of Marshallton-Thorndale and Poorhouse Roads, which was in the "What & Where Is This?" photo in the January 16 Hist-O-Gram.

According to Jack, The Books had owned the land where the old township building had been at 1535 Poorhouse Road. Parke told Jack he sold the property to the township so they would be sure that Poorhouse Road was plowed when it snowed.

After Parke died in 1981, Jack looked after Mary and Dorothy for several years, since he was under the impression that they were very poor. However, the lawyer who handled the sisters' estates told Jack that "a substantial amount of money had been stuffed in books, magazines, newspapers and paper bags" in the house.

According to [www.airfields-freeman.com/PA/Airfields\\_PA\\_Lancaster.html#shannon](http://www.airfields-freeman.com/PA/Airfields_PA_Lancaster.html#shannon), Parke established an airport in 1954 on West Bradford farmland along Marshallton-Thorndale Road. That land has been occupied by the United Sports Training Center since 1998.

Originally known as the Downingtown Airport, it had two grass runways, the longest of which was only 2,000 feet, plus a few small hangars.

Since it was difficult keeping the airport afloat financially, Parke sold it to Bob Shannon Sr. in 1961. Shannon had been working as a flight instructor for several years at West Chester, later renamed Brandywine Airport.

About the same time, Shannon purchased an airway light beacon from a closed airfield off Route 10, near the village of Compass in West Caln Township. In the 1920's and 1930's, the beacon helped guide airmail pilots who delivered mail to rural communities. Shannon bought the light beacon for \$1, disassembled it, trucked it to his airport, and reassembled it to serve as his airport's rotating beacon tower. A granite plaque, donated by the Aero Club of Chester County, was installed in 2004 on the spot on the Training Center property, where the beacon tower had been located.

Shannon paved and lengthened the runway to 3,000 feet, and offered flying lessons and private plane services. In his honor, it was renamed Shannon Memorial Airport after his death in 1970. His family operated the airport until it closed in the early 1990s

## **Clip joint will get your chip-grabbing fingers in shape**

Yes, we know the Super Bowl will be played on Sunday, February 2. In fact, we believe our monthly clipping and pasting session provides a wonderful opportunity for you to prepare for the Frozen Fanny Fest being held Sunday night at the MetLife Stadium in North Jersey.

We recently read that Americans eat more food on Super Bowl Sunday than any other day, except for Thanksgiving. In fact, the Calorie Control Council says Super Bowl fans will consume about 20.8 million pounds of potato chips and 20.8 million more pounds of tortilla chips during the game.

And in preparation for those festivities, we suggest that you get your fingers in shape for all that chip-grabbing by coming to the Historical Society, where many interesting folks will be clipping and pasting newspaper clippings for our archival collection. As usual, the session will be held from 1-4 PM on **Sunday, Feb. 2** 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 leisure.

## Members of Historical Society's board

Based on recent appointments and an election, officers of the Downingtown Area Historical Society are: Parry Desmond, president; Ernie Jameson, vice president; Marion Piccolomini, secretary; and Carol Grigson, treasurer. And the directors are: Dick Lehr, Harry Helms, Mike Dunn and Phil Dague.

## We're going to try last week's Where & What Is This? photo again



Although this was a high-profile, controversial location in the 1970s, many Hist-O-Gram subscribers must have assumed we'd be swamped with responses about this gorgeous house. In fact, no one even tried. So, we're going to try again. Please send your responses to:

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

## 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.downingtowntareahistoricalociety.org](http://www.downingtowntareahistoricalociety.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@downingtowntareahistoricalociety.org](mailto:Info@downingtowntareahistoricalociety.org).

By the way, you can access previously published Hist-O-Grams at: [www.downingtowntareahistoricalociety.org/Histograms.html](http://www.downingtowntareahistoricalociety.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](mailto: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.downingtowntown.org](http://www.downingtowntown.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](http://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.

### ***Downingtowntown 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](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)