



Downingtown Area Historical Society

Hist-O-Gram

Interesting local history, accessed from our archives

www.downingtownareahistoricalsociety.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@downingtownareahistoricalsociety.org.

Interesting local news 52 years ago

Noted below are news items, which were originally published in local newspapers in early February 1962.

Representatives of the **Uwchlan Civic Association** petitioned the township to enact an ordinance that would limit residential building lot sizes to one acre, until a study of zoning, subdivision and sanitation issues, by the township planning commission, was completed. The township, whose population at the time was less than 1,000, faced an “inevitable population boom,” according to Robert Worthington, chairman of Uwchlan’s planning commission.

Earl Stern, of the **Alert Fire Co.**, reported to Downingtown Borough Council that a new aerial ladder truck would cost between \$40,000 and \$45,000.

Officers installed at **St. Paul's UCC Church**, Lionville, were Elmer Matthews and Robert Worthington, elders; Mrs. Ernest Rodney and Harry Levering, deacons; and Richard Faddis, trustee.

Leaders of the local **Red Cross** fund drive were Mrs. Fred Pollock, Mrs. Robert Garrett, Mrs. Theodore Noll, Mrs. Gilbert Hamm, Howard Fitzgerald and Edward Gillespie.

West Pikeland residents involved in the township's **Civil Defense** effort were Robert Rometsch, director; Mrs. John Brock, supply officer; Richard Brenner, operations officer; George Seel, personnel officer; and James Godshalk, survival chairman.

The Women's Executive Board of **Central Presbyterian Church** included Mrs. Leon Williams, president; Mrs. Nelson Norris, vice president; Mrs. William Walton, treasurer; Mrs. John Fisher, secretary; Edith Stauffer, program chairman; Mrs. Austin Moore, friendship chairman; Mrs. Edwin Johnson, local church service chairman; and Mrs. Wallace Pearson, Mrs. David Ross and Mrs. George Nordblom, circle leaders.

New members of the Council at **St. Paul's Lutheran Church**, Lionville, were Eric Bittmann, Howard Stimson and Louis Maga.

Business Education Department students at DHS, who assisted with the Downingtown Chamber of Commerce shopping survey, were Michelle Buckley, Denise Joyner, Barbara Rothas, Pamela Leach and Bonnie Eachus.

The Downingtown Joint Area Elementary **School Board** decided to have a team from the University of Pennsylvania conduct a survey, to project enrollment growth over the next 10 years. Total enrollment at Beaver Creek, East Ward, Marshallton and Lionville Schools had increased from 1,009 in June 1960 to 1,291 in January, 1962.

Downingtown **Cub Scouts** who earned badges were Frank Bishop, Gary Burkey, Jeffrey Kohlhas, David Hemberger, Mickey Watts, Stuart Pollock, Eric Dreibelbis, James Connor and William Woodruff.

Members of **Brownie Troop 166**, Glenmoore, who had ice skating instructions, included Robin deRussy, Rebecca Evans, Eugenia and Vickie Gabriel, Ruth Ann Givler, Carolyn Kelly, Patty Pease, Lois Slater and Becky Wilson.

The Pickering-Brandywine School Board voted to start a kindergarten program at **Brandywine-Wallace School** next September.

Members of the Episcopal Church Women at **St. James Church**, who were responsible for a hat sale and card party, were Margaret Whitecar and Mrs. Allen Powell, co-chairmen; Mrs. Paul Pollock and Mrs. Warren Radcliffe, tickets; Mrs. George Lord, favors; Mrs. Raymond Greenleaf, hostesses; Mrs. Charles Mead, prizes; and Mrs. Neils Olsen, publicity.

Forty-four boys received their surplices at an altar boy investiture ceremony at **St. Joseph's Catholic Church**. Timothy Terramin and James Romano received awards for excellence. Richard Lichty, Ronald Ruffini and Thomas Marino were servers for the ceremony.

Ninth graders who sold tickets for the **Valentine's Dance** at the Junior High were Sally Campbell, Carol French, Edward Hildebeitel, Gail Katherman, Kenny Sigle, Vicki Thompson and Daniel Yost. And the refreshment committee included Debbie Dunn, Larry Showalter, Donald Ash, Dennis Dancy, Evelyn Sievers and Judy Ralston.

Clip Joint rescheduled for Sunday, Jan. 12

Due to the icy conditions last Sunday, we've rescheduled our monthly Clip Joint session to **Sunday afternoon, January 12**. Hope to see you between 1 PM and 4 PM this coming 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 leisure.

More *Blue and Gold* news items from the late 1950s

Here are more news items found in the DHS student newspaper, *The Blue and Gold*, donated by Caroline Ash. Members of the paper's staff during the 1957-58 school year included: Lee Shepherd, editor-in-chief; Nancy Laird and Liz Smedley, associate editors; Joan Kent, art editor; Jean Emery, music editor; Pat Weber, business editor; Iva Darlington, girls' sports editor; and Sally Lillard, society editor.

December 1957

The band was selling **wool, flannel blazers**. The cost was \$14.95 for girls and \$15.95 for boys. Each class chose a different color. The seniors chose charcoal gray, juniors opted for scarlet, and the sophomores went for royal blue. (*Editor's note: Any of those blazers hanging in someone's closet? We'd love to have one for the Historical Society's archives.*)

Soloists when the DHS mixed chorus sang "The Nativity," during the **Christmas Concert**, were Ronald Davis, Wilson Pollock, Dick Whittaker, Dan DiFonzo, Mina Massimini, Evelyn Eshelman and Eleanor Robinson.

The boys' basketball team opened its season with a **44-43 squeaker** over Kennett Square. Starters for DHS were Paul Pennypacker, Park Plank, Jack McCombs, Dick Whittaker and Jim Schollenberger.

January 1958

DHS musicians who made the **District Band** were Jerry Williams, Dan DiFonzo, Dick Whittaker, Fred Estheimer, Beatrice Rubincam and Bob Stevens.

In addition to winning the Ches-Mont League championship, the **football team** also won the J. Bishop & Co. Sportsmanship Cup for the fourth time in six years. The award was based on grading of each team by referees after every game.

Members of the **girls' basketball team** were Judy Manning, Ella Westmoreland, Bonnie Walton, Gerry McCombs, Jane Mills, Judy Scarborough, Karen Sigle and Mary Ann Philips.

February 1958

After practicing four hours daily during the summer and training in Europe, **Sandy Hamilton** signed a contract to skate with the Ice Capades.

Raymond Styer, who played the guitar while he sang "**Out Behind the Barn,**" won the talent show.

April 1958

Soloists who sang at the Junior High's **Spring Concert** were Pamela Leach, Carol Lillard, Carmelia Cressman, Ann Galt and Galucha March. They were accompanied by Judy Jones, John Rogers, Joan White and Helen Simmons.

The Keystoners—a singing group comprised of Neil Shields, Robert Shank, Lewis Wilson, Tommy Yerkes and Jim Connors—won the Junior High **Amateur Show**.

May 1958

Members of the winning **bowling team** were Linda Hadfield, Alice Gee, Polly Pennypacker, and Lee Shepherd. Bette Smedley and Nancy Pannebaker had the highest average for the Senior High and Junior High, respectively.

Gerry McCombs and Frank Marcocci were King and Queen of the **Junior Prom**.

June 1958

Student speakers at the DHS **commencement** included Ann Stratton, Rosalie Shepherd, Ruth Ann Klunk, Judith Manning and Todd Stong, who earned an appointment to West Point.

Elected as officers of the **DHS band** for next year were Nancy Jefferies, captain; Fred Estheimer, lieutenant; Jeanne Emery, Tom Johnson, Evelyn Eshelman and Bill Brookover, sergeants; and Helen Burkhart, Walter Supplee, Ed Matthews and Paul Edelen, corporals.

Don't throw that stuff away

You probably noticed that many of the articles we publish every week in the Hist-O-Gram are based on printed materials from the past, such as programs from schools, churches, businesses, clubs, Scout troops and teams with a Downingtown area connection.

So, whenever you come across these types of printed materials with a local connection, please don't toss them. Instead, donate them to the Historical Society. Please call us at 610-269-1709 or send us an email to Info@downingtowntareahistoricalsociety.org, so you can arrange to donate the materials to us.

Panetti rescued info on Tom Lee's Fire Department career

Vince Panetti tells us that we made a mistake when we claimed, in last week's Hist-O-Gram, that Tom Lee was appointed chief of the Downingtown Fire Department in 1978. Subsequently, Tom informed us that he first retired as chief after he completed a three-year term--1975, 1976 and 1977. He was succeeded as chief by Bob Cumens, who served as chief in 1978, 1979 and 1980. During those three years, Tom was assistant chief of the Alert Fire Co. Then Tom was chief of the department again, from 1981 to 1983.

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.downingtowntareahistoricalsociety.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@downingtowntareahistoricalsociety.org.

By the way, you can access previously published Hist-O-Grams at: www.downingtowntareahistoricalsociety.org/Histograms.html.

House was razed so Downingtown East Apartments could be built on the site



Joe Bird is the truly perceptive scholar who was the first person to correctly identify the East Lancaster Ave. house in the photo above. The Meisel family was the last owner of the house, at 335 East Lancaster Avenue, before it was razed so the Downingtown East Apartments (now known as the Downingtown Commons) could be built across from the Downingtown Library. The house, which had a granite exterior, had many fireplaces, and a stone milemarker (from the early Philadelphia-Lancaster Turnpike days) was in the front yard.

According to Stuart Meisel, who now lives in Fort Lauderdale, FL, his father, Maxwell Meisel, owned a pharmacy in Coatesville, and the family moved from to Downingtown in about 1945. Their property, which stretched north to beyond where Pennsylvania Avenue now is located, totaled about 12 acres. Part of that land was sold to the borough in the early 1960s, so Pennsylvania Avenue could be extended eastward, to Uwchlan Avenue. As kids, Stuart Meisel and his best friends, Larry Meredith and Ron Tipton, were “desperately unhappy” because the sale of that tract of land destroyed the “Devil’s Nest,” located in the woods behind the house, where they played as youngsters.

And the property was sold to the developer of the apartment complex shortly after Maxwell Meisel died in 1961. “My mother and I tried desperately to have the house declared an official historical site, but no luck.” Meredith claims that there was a small building behind the Meisel residence, where slaves, who escaped from the South via the Underground Railroad, often were billeted overnight. And he recalls that there was a tunnel that ran beneath the slave house and continued eastward to the house at 341 E. Lancaster Ave.

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

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