



Downingtown Area Historical Society

Hist-O-Gram

Interesting local history, accessed from our archives

www.downtowntownareahistoricalsociety.org

The past is never done. It is not even past-William Faulkner

Vol. 5, No. 30

July 23, 2014

Where and What Is This?



The first person to correctly identify the house in the photo above will be recognized as a truly perceptive scholar. Send your responses to: Info@downtowntownareahistoricalsociety.org.

Recollections of Downingtown in early 20th Century

Here are some highlights of the recollections of Raymond Dennis, a longtime borough resident who graduated from DHS in 1906, about life in Downingtown in the early 1900s. The recollections were originally published in the August 3 1978 edition of the *East Branch Citizen*.

- Most people rented their home. Their monthly rental was \$5 to \$10. A coal stove in the parlor had a pipe that extended into the ceiling in order to heat the second floor bedrooms.
- There were two bakeries in town that had delivery routes. They charged a nickel for an unwrapped loaf of bread. Pies were 5 and 10 cents, and a half dozen cinnamon buns cost a dime.
- When a woman went into labor, someone from the family had to walk or ride a horse to the doctor's since there were no phones. As a result, babies were often delivered at home by midwives. And surgery was usually performed at the patient's home.
- When someone died, neighbors often prepared the body for burial; embalming was not done.
- Most employees worked 10 hours a day, six days a week. Dennis's father was a carpenter for the Pennsylvania Railroad, earning \$60 a month. Store clerks made \$10-\$12 a week.
- "Times have not changed much over the past 80 years. Girls became pregnant and had to marry. Mothers performed abortions and the daughters died from infection, and nothing was said or done about it. It only served as gossip. The town also had call girls who used to spend their time in the daylight hours sitting by the window in the west end Post Office (at the corner of West Lancaster and Stuart Avenues), watching for the arrival of a traveling salesman."
- The Downingtown jail was located on Brandywine Avenue, next to the Downingtown Methodist Church. On Sunday morning, the kids used to climb (5-foot high wood fence between the church and the jailhouse) to look in the small window to see how many drunks had been lodged on Saturday night."
- The large tract of land—bounded by Boot Road, the Pennsylvania Railroad, Chestnut Street and Brandywine Avenue—was the ½-mile Downingtown Race Track, which included a grandstand and bleachers. Harness races were conducted on Saturday afternoons and holidays.
- Downingtown's baseball field, which included a wooden grandstand and bleachers, was located on West Lancaster Avenue (where Priori's Mattress Store is now located). The County League baseball teams, which included the West Chester, Coatesville, Parkesburg and other clubs, played Downingtown there Saturday afternoons.

Other news in early August 1978 editions of the *East Branch Citizen*

East Caln Township approved plans for the four-story, 191-room **Tabas Hotel** on Route 30, opposite the Downingtown Inn. The supervisors also learned that joint police projection with Uwchlan and Upper Uwchlan Townships would increase East Caln's budget by \$230,000.

Members of the Bob Wagner's Mill Carpet team, which won the Downingtown-Uwchlan **Babe Ruth League**, were: Bob Trauger, Tom Turner, Vince Forgione, Mike Diamond, Jay McNeil, Ted Ortiz, Dave Zynn, Dave Watts, Dave and Gary Francella, Ray Thompson, Tom Dooley and Andy Mento. The team's manager was Pat Murphy; Dennis and Dave Snyder were the assistant managers.

Phillies shortstop Larry Bowa and third base coach Billy DeMars visited **Gregg Runyan**, who was hospitalized after he suffered severe leg injuries in a car accident. Bowa and DeMars signed Runyan's leg cast and gave him an autographed baseball.

Winners of the baseball throwing competition at the **Wagenseller playground** in Glenmoore were Chris and Jennifer Nierintz, Scott Kirkpatrick, Joel Sweeney, Mike and Margaret Orth, Michael Seal and Jennifer Lutz. Members of the winning team in the scavenger hunt at **East Ward playground** were Tanya Boggs, Beth Beccone, Barbara Jean Hughes and Beverly Eldridge. And performers in a talent show at the **Beaver Creek playground** were Chris Schuhardt, who recited “Pinkie Purr;” Alex DiObilda, who did a skateboard routine; and Danny Mento, who led the group in “Simon Says.”

St. Matthews Lutheran Church in Upper Uwchlan was celebrating the 100th anniversary of the laying of the church’s cornerstone. The celebration included the inspection of the cornerstone’s contents, which included documents that dated back to 1898.

Recent **property transfers** included: 1515 Fox Run Drive, West Bradford, \$62,900; 118 Webster Avenue, Downingtown, \$38,500; 427 Fairfax Drive, Uwchlan, \$70,000; 22 Wyndham Court, East Brandywine, \$46,000;

The **Historic Yellow Springs Foundation** told West Pikeland supervisors that the foundation was “in financial trouble,” and it hoped to rectify that situation by selling some of its property. One asset it was considering selling was the Jenny Lind House on the north side of Art School Road.

Downingtown officials applied to have the following borough properties sites on East Lancaster Avenue added to the state’s **inventory of historic places**: Thomas Parke House, 320 E. Lancaster Ave.; Webster House, 429 E. Lancaster Ave.; Washington Inn, 463 E. Lancaster Ave.; Todd House, 335 E. Lancaster Ave.; Jug House, 736 E. Lancaster Ave.; Breezy Court, 517 E. Lancaster Ave.; Meredith Rogers House, 425 E. Lancaster Ave.; Milton Hoopes Pottery, 413 and 423 E. Lancaster Ave.; St. James Episcopal Church, 409 E. Lancaster Ave.; Tea House, 341 E. Lancaster Ave.; Downingtown Friends Meetinghouse, 800 E. Lancaster Ave.; Arts and Crafts House, 364 E. Lancaster Ave.; Downingtown National Bank, 408 E. Lancaster Ave.; and Ellis Y. Brown House, 328 E. Lancaster Ave.

Dr. Charles Micken, **Downingtown School superintendent**, reported that the number of students projected to attend the district’s 11 schools in September had increased by less than 1 per cent, to a total of 7,098. Micken also noted the district’s total population had increased by 6.6 per cent, to 32,589 (by 2014, that total has nearly doubled), since September 1977.

Members of **Boy Scout Troop 8**, sponsored by Hopewell Methodist Church, who spent six days paddling along the Shenandoah River, included: Sean Breckley, Gary Bareford, Mike Davis, Alan Dawson, Steve Dolnack, Dale and Doug Fillman, Billy and Jimmy Flanagan, Scott Hunter, Jeff McCarty, Bob McCue and Peter Shaeffer.

The Keds team won the **Downingtown Team Tennis League**. Members of the team were Jamie Geschwindt, Marie Gillooly, Melissa Schneider, David and Bill Jemison, Dan Cook, Sara Nothstein, David Hammer and Craig Davis. Shirley Jemison was their coach.

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. And you can access previously published Hist-O-Grams at: www.downingtownareahistoricalociety.org/Histograms.html.

It's at 408 E. Lancaster Ave. and was an early site of DNBFirst



Seth Boer is a truly perceptive scholar because he was the person to correctly identify the house in the photo above as the one located at 408 E. Lancaster Ave., Downingtown. It took two years to construct the building because artisans took time off to fight in the Civil War. The house's bricks were produced at Cox's brickyard on the east side of Whiteland Avenue, below Washington Avenue, according to Jane Davidson's *A History of Downingtown*. And according to

Charles Pennypacker's *History of Downingtown*, the building was the site of the Downingtown National Bank (now DNBFirst) from 1862 until 1901, when a larger facility was opened on Center Square in the borough. For more details, see: www.trulia.com/property/3142493911-408-E-Lancaster-Ave-Downingtown-PA-19335.

Officers of the Downingtown Area Historical Society are: Parry Desmond, president; Ernie Jameson, vice president; Carol Grigson, treasurer and archivist; Marion Piccolomini, recording secretary. The board of directors includes: Harry Helms, Mike Dunn, Francine Dague and Phil Dague.

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

Drum & Bugle Corps Competition

The Downingtown Music Boosters and the Reading Bucaneers will present the Downingtown Classic Drum & Bugle Corps Competition at Kottmeyer (DHS West) Stadium Saturday, July 26, at 7 PM; gates open at 5:30 PM. In addition to a special performance by the DHS Blue & Gold Band and competition by seven outstanding drum and bugle corps, the program will include a special performance by the U.S. Marine Drum and Bugle Corps. Tickets can be purchased at the stadium's box office, beginning at 2 PM on Saturday. Reserved seat tickets are \$18 and general admission tickets are \$15. For more info, see: www.downingtownclassic.com.

Chicken BBQ

The Marshallton United Methodist Church, 1282 West Strasburg Road, will host a Chicken BBQ dinner on Saturday, July 26. The menu includes BBQ chicken (leg/thigh), cole slaw, corn on the cob, baked beans, roll & butter, dessert, and a beverage. Hours for the "Eat-in" or "Take-out" option are from 4:30 to 6 PM. Cost is \$10/adult and \$5/child (5 to 12 years of age). Contact the church office at 610-696-5247 or via office@marshalltonchurch.org.

Teri's Run & Walk

13th annual Teri's Run and Twilight Walk for Scleroderma will be held on Friday, September 5. The evening's events include: 6:30 PM – Kids Run, 7 PM – 5K Run & 1 Mile Walk, 8 PM – Awards Ceremony. Chip-Timed Walk and Run on fast, flat, spectator-friendly course that starts on Green Street in Downingtown. The run is dedicated to the memory of Teri Valocchi and all those who have lost their battle to Scleroderma. Register Online at www.terisrun.org.

Log House Art & Craft Show

The Borough of Downingtown is looking for vendors for its annual Log House Art & Craft Show, to be held Sunday, September 21, from noon - 4 PM at Kerr Park. Vendor spaces are available for \$25. Handmade art, crafts and photography only. Those interested in learning more or applying to participate can visit the website: www.downingtown.org or call 610-269-0344.

Blood Drive

There will be a Red Cross Blood Drive on Friday, August 8 from 2-7 PM at the Borough Hall Annex Building, 4 W. Lancaster Avenue, Downingtown, PA. Visit www.downingtowntown.org to sign up.

Swinging Summer Saturday

The Downingtown Main Street Association will have a street festival from 5 PM to 10 PM on Saturday, August 9 in the "pocket park" on East Lancaster Avenue (next to Downingtown Country Gifts) in the borough. Local crafts people, restaurants and businesses that wish to participate should contact: manager@downingtowntownmainstreet.com for booth space applications and more details.

DHS Class of 1964 reunion

Reservations for the DHS Class of 1964's 50th class reunion are due by **July 31 (new deadline)**. The reunion will be held 6-11 PM at St. Anthony's Lodge in Downingtown on Saturday, Sept. 27. Cost is \$50 per person. Due to construction at DHS West, the homecoming date was moved to Oct. 17. So there will be no parade on Sept. 25. However, as part of the reunion, the class still plans to attend the football game on Friday night, Sept 26. For more information see: <http://dhsclassof64.org/> or contact Judi (Grubb) Supplee, via jsupplee@x-coretechnologies.com or call 610-220-6138.

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2 winners will get a playhouse

The Homebuilders of Chester and Delaware Counties are sponsoring a fundraiser in which two winners will win a backyard playhouse. The playhouses are 8 feet wide, 8 feet long and 8 feet tall. Proceeds from the fundraiser will go to Kenzie's Kure, whose mission is to cure Type 1 Diabetes. Tickets are \$25 each. The winning tickets will be drawn at the Fall Into Fabulous event at the Downingtown Country Club on October 2. For more details and buy tickets, click on: www2.jdrf.org/fallintofabulous.

Log House Dinner Raffle

Winner of the raffle will win a dinner for four at the Downingtown Log House on Lancaster Avenue. The dinner will be catered by St. Anthony's Restaurant. To purchase raffle tickets—\$50 each—call Ginny Pierce, 610-269-2750. Proceeds from the raffle will go to the Downingtown Area Senior Center. The winning ticket will be drawn at the Senior Center's Harvest Hop on November 8.

Farmers Market

The Downingtown Farmers Market is now held in Kerr Park, by the gazebo area of Kerr Park on Pennsylvania Avenue in the borough, on Saturdays, from 9 AM to 1 PM.

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.

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 at 7:30 PM on the 2nd & 4th Tuesday 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.

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