



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 site, shown above, will be recognized as a truly perceptive scholar. Please send your responses to: Info@downingtownareahistoricalsociety.org.

Nicknames story led local news 36 years ago

Noted below are excerpts from a story about the nicknames of residents of the Johnstontown section of Downingtown, which was the lead article in the *East Branch Citizen* in the latter part of June 1978.

“It’s embarrassing,” admitted Jack Helm, the Downingtown Postmaster who had grown up in the borough. You’d think Helm would have recognized the names of most of the people from the Johnstontown section of the borough when their obituaries were published in local newspapers.

However, Helm acknowledged that he occasionally missed the funerals of Johnstown residents, whom he had known for decades, because only their *real* names—and not their nicknames—were published in obituaries.

That's because most Johnstown residents, especially males of Italian heritage, had nicknames—often tacked on by childhood friends—which they were known by all over town for the rest of their lives.

For example, Anthony Bartelmo started being called "Fat Horse" by his school buddies because he was so much bigger than his friends, explained his daughter, Louise DeMucci. "After he got married, they called his wife 'Pee Wee.' They made quite a pair," she added.

Also, consider a great moniker like "Johnny Saturday." His real name was John Donofrio, and he was a postman in the borough for many years. He earned that nickname because "he was the best football player Downingtown ever had," asserted, Helm, who was a great DHS football player as well. And after Donofrio carried back a kickoff 95 yards for a touchdown against arch-rival Coatesville one Saturday afternoon, he was forever known to most borough residents as "Johnny Saturday."

And some guys got their nicknames from their siblings. Samuel "Chicken" Mento explained that his mother always cut the first piece of a chicken, usually a choice cut of white meat, for him because he was a sickly child. "And my brothers and sisters got so jealous they started calling me Chicken."

Other news items

Noted below are other news items originally published in the *East Branch Citizen* in the latter part of June 1978:

The **Pepperidge Farm** English muffin plant on Boot Road, Downingtown, was closed for several weeks after a fire did more than \$150,000 damage.

While celebrating his 25th anniversary as an employee of Downingtown, Borough Manager **Don Greenleaf** recalled that he was a gangly 20-year-old when he started working in the municipal engineering department in 1953.

The **Downingtown Library** thanked the Lions and Rotary Clubs for their donations of five smoke detectors and a heat detector. And Downingtown National Bank donated \$300 toward the library's summer reading program.

Installed as officers of the **Downingtown Welcome Wagon Club** were Jackie Willard, president; Pat Barnes, first vice president; Susan Levin, secretary; and Sandy Lefler, treasurer.

Officers of **St. Joseph's Home and School Association** were Dennis McBride, president; Mike McDonald, vice president; Pat Moffitt, treasurer; Ann Geyer, recording secretary; and Maryann Sills, corresponding secretary.

Leaders chosen to lead the **Downingtown Area Education Secretaries Association** were Anita Ayoub, president; Phyllis Mattson, vice president; Shirley Nelms, secretary; and Barbara Mento treasurer. Also, Mrs. Mento, secretary at New East Ward School, was honored for her 25 years of service to the school district.

Recent **property transfers** included: 1319 Broadview West, West Bradford, \$63,900; 11 Fox Chase Lane, Upper Uwchlan, \$71,934; 563 Westwood Drive, Uwchlan, \$65,750; 423 W. Pennsylvania Avenue, Downingtown, \$42,500; 31 Blakely Road, East Brandywine, \$82,360; 4 Dogwood Lane, West Pikeland, \$117,500; 145 Woodland Circle, East Caln, \$84,750.



Ground broken for new library

The Downingtown Library's board of directors held a groundbreaking ceremony on Tuesday for its new home at 122 Wallace Avenue, adjacent to Kerr Park in Downingtown. The rendering above shows what the front of the new library will look like when renovations to the School District's former Micken Administration Building are completed in the late fall.

In addition to nearly doubling the library overall space, the new facility will offer handicap accessibility, as many as 10 computer stations and increased parking—from nine spaces at the old library to 23 at the new site.

Even in this digital age, the current library has been a well-used community center. One out of every four Downingtown area residents does not have a personal computer at home and many of them rely on the library for access to the Internet.

More than 900 teens and adults annually participate in the library's educational programs or access vital information on health and human services there, and over 110,000 individuals borrow books and materials.

Established in 1876, the library has been located at 330 East Lancaster Ave. since 1914.

Deborah Miles, president of the library's board of directors, indicated that the current library is not handicap accessible, nor is it easy for senior citizens or caregivers with young children to use. Also, parking is limited. And collection development, program offerings, and information technology are significantly restricted because of a lack of space. These factors were prominent in the board's decision to relocate.

The board has launched a successful capital campaign to purchase the new facility. The campaign has raised 57% of its \$2.2 million goal. The board plans to sell the existing facility soon, and will use the proceeds to help purchase the new property.

The library received a Pennsylvania Redevelopment Assistance Capital Project Grant with the help of State Senator Andy Dinniman and an Institute of Museum and Library Services Technology Grant with the help of Congressman Jim Gerlach.

For more information or to make a gift, contact: Karen Miller at (610) 269-2741 or visit: www.downingtowntownlibrary.org.

DHS alums suggest two possible alma mater lyricists

We still haven't determined who was the lyricist of the DHS alma mater. In fact, we also don't even know when the words were written.

However, as noted in last week's Hist-O-Gram, the DHS alma mater's lyrics were published in the February 1922 edition of *The Cuckoo*, a publication periodically put out by the high school's students more than 90 years ago. The letters "C.C. S." were printed underneath those published lyrics, leading us to suspect those were the lyricist's initials.

However, two DHS alumni have chosen to ignore that suspicion and offered their candidates.

Dr. John Rogers, a retired prof at Shippensburg University, wrote: "I always thought Niels Olsen and another Downingtown High School student wrote the words to the alma mater some time in the 1930s. In any case, the first time I heard the "1812 Overture," I was surprised that a composer from darkest Russia had 'lifted' our alma mater to include in one of his most famous works."

And Frank Manetta, former borough mayor, wrote: "I think Marion Phillips, POD (Problems of Democracy) teacher wrote the lyrics to the alma mater. I remember her telling me the melody was from the Russian National Anthem."

Also, on a related note, Rose Ciarlone recalls that, when returning from an away game, as a member of the DHS marching band (she was a majorette) and tennis team, all the kids were expected to stand up as the school bus was getting close to the high school and sing the alma mater. As a safety precaution, that practice is no longer allowed.

It was a springhouse on the MacFarland property in E. Brandywine



Peter Chim is a truly perceptive scholar because he was the first person to correctly identify this photo, taken by Mike Dunn, as the former springhouse on the MacFarland farm on Buck Road, near Route 322 in East Brandywine Township. It's now a residence. A master's thesis on the MacFarland farm property was done in 1998 by Rebecca A. Geist, while she was a graduate student at the University of Pennsylvania. In addition to a history of the house, the thesis includes many photos and detailed drawings related to the project. You can access the thesis at: <http://archive.org/stream/macfarlanhousesu00geis#page/n5/mode/2up>.

DHS football history on Facebook

To see lots of info on DHS football history, see www.facebook.com/groups/594722887247727/. And we understand that an FB page on DHS baseball history also is being developed.

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.downingtownareahistoricalsociety.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.downingtownareahistoricalsociety.org/Histograms.html.

Hist-O-Grams are emailed weekly to members and friends of the Downingtown Area Historical Society. If you want to send us information or make a comment, contact us at: Info@DowningtownAreaHistoricalSociety.org.

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

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Contact: vance_usher@netzero.com, 610-329-1056, 320 E. Lancaster Ave., Downingtown, PA 19335.

Free ads for Non-Profits

Community Festival

St. Joseph's Catholic Church is sponsoring a Community Festival on the church grounds on Manor Avenue in Downingtown. The festival will be held 6-10 PM Tuesday, June 17 through Thursday, June 19, and 6-11 PM on Friday, June 20 and Saturday, June 21. The attractions include rides for children and adults, live bands, games and food. For discounted ride deals, access <http://stjoesfestival.com> or the church's Facebook page. Also, there will be fireworks Friday night, June 20.

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 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.