



Downingtown Area Historical Society

Hist-O-Gram

Interesting local history, accessed from our archives

www.downingtownareahistoricalociety.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@downingtownareahistoricalociety.org.

Local news items from 68 years ago

Noted below are news items about the Downingtown area, which were originally published in local newspapers in December 1946.

Four Downingtown residents were among the six people who died in **one of Chester County's worst vehicular accidents**, when a small coupe collided with an oil tank-truck on

Route 322, just below the borough's southern border, on Dec. 11, 1946. Killed in the horrific crash were borough residents Donald Jameson, Vincent Zinni, and Carmen and Violet Marino, and Fred Pizzi, of West Chester, and James Puia, of Ambler.

Anyone recall these long-gone, local businesses: Don Forbes' **Downingtown Beverage Distributing Co.**, rear of 131 E. Lancaster Ave., Downingtown; **Odenweller's Restaurant** on Route 30 in Thorndale; or when **Lineinger's** in Whitford, which in addition to being a fuel oil and coal dealer, also sold Purina Cow Chow to local dairy farmers?

Businesses on West Lancaster Avenue, Downingtown, arranged for a sound system to be temporarily installed on the roof of **Greenleaf's Pharmacy**, so neighbors and shoppers could hear Christmas carols.

More than 700 youngsters from the borough and five surrounding township schools enjoyed seeing a professional stage play, presented in the DHS auditorium, which was sponsored and paid for the **Downingtown Lions Club**.

Since each of the towns' draft boards were no longer as busy as they had been during World War II, the **Selective Service Boards** in West Chester, Coatesville and Downingtown were merged and re-located to Downingtown's Borough Hall.

DHS gridders, named to the 1946 All-County team by sports editors of Chester County's three daily newspapers, were: Dick Dague, first team halfback; and Joseph Doran, second team guard, and Tom DiOttavio, second team halfback. Whippets given honorable mention recognition were: John Fleck, end; Ray Kipp, tackle; Duane Chesney, guard; Vince Massimini, center; and Joe Capriotti, back.

Officers of the **Upper Uwchlan School Board** included Wayne Pollock, president; Rhys Carpenter, vice president; Ray Woodland, secretary; and Stephen Moore, treasurer.

Elected as officers of the Alpha Bible Class of the Sunday School at **Downingtown Baptist Church** were Mrs. Robert Laird, president; Anna Hall, vice president; Mrs. Frank Smedley, secretary; and Mrs. Walter Fisher, treasurer.

After losing a 19-13 lead at halftime, the **DHS boys' basketball team** rallied to beat West Chester's St. Agnes Catholic High School 37-35. Last-minute field goals by Dick Dague and Dan Barrow enabled coach Hank Goudie's Whippets to gain the win over the Stags.

Belle Hutchison, president, and Robert Ash, vice president were elected to lead the **Downingtown School Board**.

Frank Swarner was elected president of the Washington Camp No. 338, **Patriotic Order of Sons of the America**, Downingtown. Also elected were Allen Harris, vice president; Thomas Philips, master of forms; Spencer Windle, recording secretary; Leland Wilson, treasurer; Gilbert Cox, financial secretary; Percy Windle, conductor; Frank Bicking, inspector; Allen Keim, guard; and Allen Harris, trustee.

Officers of the Busy Bees group at **Downingtown Methodist Church** included Betty Hope, president; Mary Jane Detterline, vice president; Helen Nelms, secretary; Mary Wagner, treasurer; and Virginia Thrasher, publicity.

Local Masons, installed as officers at the **Williamson Lodge** in Downingtown, included Robert Piersol, worshipful master; Edward Towson, senior warden; John McCausland, junior warden; Leland Wilson, treasurer; Arthur Walton, secretary; Edward McCausland, representative to the Grand Lodge; and Arthur Glauner and Edgar Griffith, trustees.

More than 90 World War II vets and their guests were invited to the **Downingtown Moose Lodge** for a turkey dinner, prepared and served under the supervision of Dorothy McClure, and a program arranged by Webster Hilton. Arthur Phillips, who served as toastmaster, called upon

Leo Hamilton, Downingtown's burgess; Harry Elston, American Legion commander; and Henry Thomas, VFW commander; to offer remarks. The evening concluded with dancing.

School Board officers for the coming year at **Marshallton Methodist Church** were John Morris, president; Robert Cathcart, vice president; Earl Spellman, second vice president; Mrs. Ralph Wallace, corresponding secretary; Charles Busby, assistant secretary; Betty Keehn, recording secretary; Evelyn Fling, treasurer; Mrs. George McAllister, temperance superintendent; Mrs. Wilmer Kennedy, missionary superintendent; Mrs. Leedom Mercer, home department; Mrs. Harold Robinson, music; and Mrs. George Lied, cradle roll. And men in the congregation started remodeling the church basement, so it can be used for Sunday School classes and as a recreation room.

Standouts at Old East Ward School in 1974

Linda Lefko donated to the Historical Society a copy of the Old East Ward School's 1974 yearbook, when the school on East Lancaster Ave., Downingtown, was a sixth grade center.

Standouts in the class that year were: Alan Dawson and Nancy Deane, best citizens; Suzanne Pike and Chris Fisher, most courteous; Song Hagel and Barry DiLibero, friendliest; Eddie Novak and Jean Sciarretta, most athletic; Scott Kohler and Sandy Williams, most likely to succeed; Laura Boryta and Robert Klinger, best musicians; Sandy Williams and Mike Jacobs, best all-around students; Jane Kaster and Craig Otto, best dressed; Pam Paulson and Carl Hurst, hardest workers; Ricky Betres and Diane DeGezelle, wittiest; Susan Widen and Robert Forrest quietest; Nick Ursini and Barbara Berry, best artists; and Cindy Stewart and Philip Taraschi, most mischievous.

Editor's Note: We have many DHS yearbooks in our Archives, but few from elementary, junior highs or middle schools in the Downingtown School District. Please contact us at Info@downingtowntareahistoricalociety.org, if you wish to donate yearbooks from your early school days.

Frank Manetta was right about the site of the fire

Frank Manetta remembers one important fact that was left out of the May 8 Hist-O-Gram, when we noted that Joe Bird had correctly identified the building in the Where & What Is This? photo. Yes, the building in the photo was the Feed Mill at the intersection of Viaduct and West Lancaster Avenues in Downingtown.

However, insisted Manetta in several emails he sent to us, that the building on fire and not visible in the smoke when the photo was taken in the fall of 1947, was the **Field Tire Co.** The tire firm was then located, behind the Feed Mill, at 2 Viaduct Avenue. Also south of the Feed Mill on Viaduct Avenue, and next to the Field Tire Co. at that time, was the Kulp and Gordon truck terminal.

Manetta apparently was one of the many students from the nearby West Ward School who watched the tire firm burn to the ground that day.

As a result of the devastating fire, the tire store was re-located to a building on Stuart Avenue, which had once been the Lincoln Theatre, where one-reel comedy movies were shown in the early 20th Century.

When an Air Force jet crashed into Worthington orchard in Uwchlan

A trainer jet plane “crashed with a thunderous explosion” into the 10-acre Worthington orchard in Uwchlan on May 18, 1950, according to the following day’s edition of the *Pottstown Mercury*. The T-33 plane narrowly missed the home, garage and water tower on the Worthington property. When it crashed, the plane created a hole that was about 5 feet deep and 10 feet in diameter. None of the Worthington family members were at home when the crash occurred.

The plane’s two fliers parachuted to safety at 11,000 feet when the plane ran out of fuel on a routine flight between Indianapolis and Langley Field, VA. The fliers stayed overnight in the Mansion House hotel in West Chester, and then returned to the orchard property with state police the next day.

Neighbors said the plane was on fire as it streaked earthward. A fire in part of the plane was extinguished by the Lionville Fire Co. The day after the crash, the Worthington property was guarded by U.S. Air Force personnel, to ward off souvenir hunters until the plane’s remnants could be retrieved by the Air Force.

Fred Majka, retired math teacher and Marshallton Methodist’s office manager, sent us news clippings related to the plane crash.

‘Anti-progressives’ dominated Downingtown until early 20th Century

Construction of a brick building on the northeast corner of Pennsylvania and Wallace Avenues in Downingtown was underway, and the structure would soon be occupied by the recently chartered Downingtown Iron Works, according to an article in the Feb. 22, 1913 edition of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. The “Philadelphia capitalists” backing the new steel-plate fabrication firm were Louis Zimmerman, Parke Plank and Harold Abele, noted the *Inquirer*.

However, “going back a decade, it is learned that the progress of Downingtown was hindered by a number of anti-progressives who seemed to control the town,” claimed the reporter who wrote the news story. The article went on to say that the anti-progressives had successfully opposed (in the late 18th Century) a plan to locate the Chester County courthouse in what now is part of the 200 block of West Lancaster Avenue in the borough, “because of the fear that an undesirable class of people would settle” in the town.

And in the 19th Century, “the introduction of manufacturing enterprises was opposed on the grounds that there would be too much noise and bustle, and that the splendor of landscape and the serenity of lives of the anti-progressives would be disturbed,” continued the article.

However, “men with modern ideas” gained control in the borough during the early 20th Century. And a Board of Trade (precursor of the Downingtown Chamber of Commerce) was established in 1909, the year the borough celebrated the 50th anniversary of its 1859 incorporation, and the village was no longer a subservient part of rural East Caln Township.

When Downingtown had been part of East Caln, the township’s ruling class, primarily farmers who had no interest in spending tax dollars on building wooden sidewalks in the village, so the upstarts’ boots would no longer be muddied up as they walked through the village’s growing commercial district.

The Board of Trade’s officers back then were Joseph Johnson, president; Herbert Ash, secretary; and M.S. Broadt, treasurer.

In addition to helping with establishing the Iron Works in the borough, the Board of Trade fostered the 1911 establishment of the Watco Knitting Co. in Downingtown, which produced underwear. Several years later, however, the knitting company moved to Phoenixville.

Another sign of progress in the borough, touted by the Board of Trade, was a 12-grade, 14-classroom school (later known as the West Ward School), which was built for \$90,000 in 1910 on West Lancaster Avenue, on a site near where Messiah Lutheran Church is now located.

Officials responsible for the borough's improvements, according to the article, were: Thomas Pedrick, burgess (mayor); F. J. McGraw, president of Borough Council; Dr. L. T. Bremmerman, school board president; and Guyon Miller, fire marshal.

It's at 1309 North Bailey Road in Caln Township



Donna Kneisly is a truly perceptive scholar because she was the first person to correctly identify the site in the photo above as the house at 1309 North Bailey Road in Caln Township.

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. **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.**

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

Farmers Market

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

Flower Sale

Marshalltown United Methodist Church's Men's Flower Sale will begin Friday, May 9 and will continue through Wednesday, May 28. The church is located at 1282 W. Strasburg Road, Marshallton. Hours are 9 AM to 5 PM, Monday through Saturday. The sale will feature large hanging baskets, annuals, geraniums, climbing mandevilles, perennials, vegetables, herbs, patio planters and more. Proceeds will help support local, regional, and global outreach. For more information, contact the church office at [\(610\) 696-5247](tel:6106965247).

East Brandywine Baptist's history

The East Brandywine Township Historical Commission will present a lecture on the history of East Brandywine Baptist Church, will be held at the church at 3:30 PM on Sunday, May 18.

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.

Officers of the Downtown 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, Dick Lehr, Mike Dunn and Phil Dague.