

Help us save our 305-year-old headquarters



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

Interesting local history, accessed from our archives

www.downingtownareahistoricalsociety.org

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

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Where 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.

Lindbergh's landing in W. Bradford was a historic event

Charles Lindbergh became the world's best-known celebrity during the Roaring Twenties, after he was the first pilot to make a solo, non-stop, trans-Atlantic flight on May 20-21, 1927.

So when "Lucky Lindy's" plane made an emergency landing, due to poor visibility because of a dense fog, almost a year later in a field on the farm property of Emmor Way, in the Romansville section of West Bradford Township, that was a major event in Chester County history.

And local residents were astounded when they learned that Lindbergh and New York attorney Henry Breckenridge had landed in Lindbergh's plane *Lone Eagle* on March 13, 1928, according to news reports a day later. Lindbergh's plane was a duplicate of *The Spirit of St. Louis*, the plane he had flown from Roosevelt Field, Long Island, NY, to Paris on the historic flight in 1927.

According to the *Coatesville Record*, the two men were flying from Long Island, NY, en route to a dinner in Washington, DC, where they were to be guests of Nicholas Longworth, speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives.

The article in the *Record* also reported that 17-year-old Frank Elvin, grandson of Emmor and Sarah Way, was working on the Way farm with a team of horses when he saw the plane making several low passes before it finally landed in the field. Lindbergh and Breckenridge climbed out of the plane, and Elvin guided them to his grandparents' nearby Way farmhouse. As the visitors entered the house, and Sarah Way got over the shock of who was on her doorstep, she said, "Why you're Lindbergh."

"A lot of people take me for Lindbergh," he replied cryptically, but then he dropped his head and smiled.

A few minutes later, Edith Marks, a housekeeper at the neighboring farm of Charles Elkington, arrived at the Way farmhouse, wondering if anyone had been hurt when the mysterious plane had landed.

And when the possibility of the two visitors staying overnight at the Way farm came up in a conversation, Mrs. Way said they could stay there, and the men were agreeable to that option. But Marks suggested that they stay at the larger Elkington farm on Chestnut Lane, which was later owned and operated for about 25 years by movie actor Claude Rains.

Not until Lindbergh and his companion arrived at the Elkington farm did he acknowledge his identity. And he informed Mrs. Elkington that he wanted the utmost seclusion and pledged her to secrecy.

However, soon after Charles Elkington arrived home from his Philadelphia brokerage office, it was obvious that secrecy had vanished. Many major newspapers telephoned the Elkington residence and reporters on site were constantly knocking at the Elkington's door, in an unsuccessful effort to determine if Lindbergh was inside and asking for an interview. While looking through the Elkington's dining room windows, the reporters finally verified that Lindbergh was one of the people who had landed in the plane that afternoon. And Lindbergh finally met briefly with the reporters, but other than shaking hands with several of them and constantly smiling, he never answered any questions.

Immediately after dinner, Lindbergh called Sarah Way and confirmed that the flier who visited her that afternoon was Lindbergh, and explained that he was only trying to avoid the limelight, as usual, when he didn't reveal his true identity to her. Then the two guests, carrying oil lamps, went to their rooms on the second floor.

In the meantime, word of the two visitors had spread across Chester County and way beyond. People were swarming over the Elkington property when Lindbergh woke up at 5:30 the next morning and ate breakfast. Lindbergh graciously shook hands with many in the crowd of curiosity-seekers before he and his lawyer climbed into the plane, which had been guarded over night by young Elvin, and continued on their flight to Washington, DC.

Lone Eagle Road, near Romansville, was named to commemorate Lindbergh's accidental, but historic visit.

Student newspaper provides info on Class of 1956

Ron Tipton, Class of 1959, recently donated a slew of stuff from his days at DHS. They included many copies of the *Blue and Gold*, Downingtown Junior-Senior High School's student newspaper. Interesting tidbits retrieved from the winter and spring editions in 1956 include:

- Members of the cast of the Junior Class Play included: Bud Rennard, Warren Reese, Jane Louise Davis, Stella Karahalis, Dotty Fisher, Barry Wickersham, Vaughnie Yarnall, Bob Manning, Doug Hedrick, Joe Bird, Dolly Luminella, Joan Quartucci, Tom Hughes, Ruth Hall and Gwen Curry.
- Irv Rubincam, Jack Dawson and Joan Piersol were named to the District Band.
- Members of the varsity basketball team were Tony Price, Joe Whiteman, Harry Watson, Jim Walton, John Bousum, Donnie Mull, Bob McClure, Johnny Chilla and Jack Skiles.
- Eighth graders Walter Supplee and Tommy Booker won awards in the Chester County DAR's public speaking competition.
- Members of the decorations committee for the Soph Hop were Mena Massimini, Rosalie Sarmiento, Bill Pierce, Susie McClure and Lee Shepard.
- Despite the scoring efforts of Tony Price and John Chilla, the Whippet basketball team succumbed to Coatesville in a 49-46 heartbreaker.
- The Class of 1956 had 126 seniors, making it the largest graduating class in DHS history. Commencement speakers were Joan Piersol, Philomena DiBerardinis and John Dawson. Virginia Stayer won the \$4,000 McIlvain scholarship.
- Bud Rennard won the Student Council presidency for the 1956-57 school year, beating opponents Barry Wickersham and Joe Bird, who was named Judge of the Tribunal and elected president of the Class of 1957.
- Noteworthy according to their 1956 classmates were: Carol Bruton and Ed Delio, best artists; Nancy Hadfield and Irv Rubincam, best musicians; Connie Osborn and Bill Davidson, noisiest; Wanda Farra and Page Brown, cutest couple; Pat Snyder and Donald Runk, quietist; Connie Osborne and Joe Whiteman, best dancers; Joan Peirsol and John Bousum, best all-around and most likely to succeed; Linda Edelen and John Carmichael, best actor and actress; Betty Jesse and Sam Matthews, best personalities; Patty Gasbarro and Bob McClintock, most courteous; Mary Jane Mascherino and John Chilla, most athletic; Wanda Farra and Jim Walton, wittiest; Kathy D'Atilio and Bob Hamilton, best dressed.

Thorndale Inn is helping us save Ashbridge House

The Thorndale Inn is one of the six local restaurants that are helping the Historical Society pay to have the leaking stone walls of Ashbridge House, our 305-year-old headquarters, re-mortared. All the proceeds from our second annual "A Taste of Chester County" restaurant raffle will be used to pay for the re-pointing work.

The Thorndale Inn is a former farmhouse, built in the late 18th Century. The building has housed a restaurant since 1938; it has been known as the Thorndale Inn since 1974. Owner Sam Estephan has operated the restaurant for 29 years.

Renowned for its consistent quality food, exceptional customer service, reasonable prices, and an array of culinary delights, the restaurant offers a wide selection of prime steaks and seafood dishes, as well as Italian specialties.

The Inn features a main dining room, a comfortable bar with a casual atmosphere, private banquet rooms and a spacious outdoor deck. It can host all types of events, from wedding receptions and rehearsal dinners to anniversary celebrations, luncheons, holiday parties and company meetings.

The Inn, located at 430 Bondsville Road in Caln, is open for lunch and dinner 7 days a week. Discounts are offered to seniors. Call 610-269-5455 or email info@thorndaleinn.com to make a reservation.

Hours for Monday through Saturday are: Lunch-11:30 AM to 4 PM; and Dinner-4:30-10:30 PM. Sunday hours are: 1-9 PM. Bar hours on Sunday through Thursday are 11:30 AM though midnight, and 11:30 AM to 2 AM on Fridays and Saturdays.

For more information about the Inn, check out: www.thorndaleinn.com/.

Other restaurants participating in the raffle are: Amani's BYOB, St. Anthony's restaurant, The General Warren Inn, The Kimberton Inn, and The Orangery.

Raffle tickets are \$50 each. They can be purchased by:

- Sending a check, made out to DAHS and mailed to: DAHS, P.O. Box 9, Downingtown, PA 19335;
- Buying them at Ashbridge House, next to the Chick-Fil-A Restaurant on Route 30, on Sundays from 1-4 PM;
- Buying them at one of the participating restaurants.

You also can order them by calling 610-269-1709 or sending an email to:

Info@downingtowntareahistoricalociety.org.

The winning ticket will be drawn at 3 PM on Sunday, November 16. You don't have to be at the drawing to win. For more info on the raffle, go to:

www.downingtowntareahistoricalociety.org. Please help us preserve Ashbridge House, a local historic treasure.

1937 Alert Fire Co. fair featured Human Rocket Man

Downingtown's Alert Fire Co. celebrated its 50th anniversary by holding a fair in July 1937, according to a special edition of the *Alert Fire Company News*, printed by Walton Studio. Proceeds from the fair were to be used to build a new fire hall.

Grand prizes at the fair were: a 16-foot long Covered Wagon Trailer, with a steel chassis and body; a 1937 Oldsmobile from Usher Motor Co.; and a boy's deluxe bicycle. Also, one of these gate prizes was awarded each night: a Universal washer-drier, a Delco console model radio, an automatic ironer with "feather touch control," a Toastmaster with a hospitality tray, two Sunbeam Mixmasters, and \$50 cash.

In addition to a ferris wheel and a merry-go-round, entertainment at the fair included "Pickard Family of Radio Fame." The main attraction apparently was the Human Rocket Man, who climbed in a projectile and then was shot 80 feet into the air and a distance of 170 feet.

Where the fair was held was not included in the promotional newspaper. However, it's not likely that the site was on the Alert Fire Co. property—located on Downing Avenue in the borough back in 1937—because there wasn't much room at the fire station for the Human Rocket Man to be projected that great distance.

It's at 1575 Shadyside Road in West Bradford



Not one person even tried to identify the house in the photo (taken by Mike Dunn) above. Built in 1796, the house is located at 1575 Shadyside Road, near Waimea Drive, in West Bradford 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.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. And you can access previously published Hist-O-Grams at: www.downingtowntareahistoricalsociety.org/Histograms.html.

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.net, 610-329-1056, 320 E. Lancaster Ave., Downingtown, PA 19335.

Free ads for Non-Profits

Ghost Walk

The Downingtown Paranormal group will conduct a Ghost Walk at the Historic Yellow Springs Inn, 1685 Art School Road, Chester Springs, from 4-10 PM on Sunday October 26. Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$5 for kids under 12. All proceeds will benefit the preservation of Historic Yellow Springs.

Harvest Hop

The Downingtown Area Senior Center's annual Harvest Hop at the Ludwigs Corner Fire Hall from 7-11 PM Saturday, Nov. 8 will feature an Italian dinner, including wine (must be 21 to attend), from 7:30-9 PM. The event will include music, an auction and raffles. Tickets, \$40 each, can be bought by sending a check to: DASC, 983 E. Lancaster Ave., Downingtown, PA 19335. Reservations also can be made by calling Sue at 610-269-3939 or via www.downingtowntareaseniorcenter.org.

Hope for Helm Fundraiser

Matt Helm is paralyzed from the waist down, due to a recent kayaking accident. Matt was born and raised in Downingtown, and is known as an exceptional person and a tremendous athlete. He and his wife, Lindsay Helm, live in Downingtown and had a new son, Hunter Helm, in August. The family faces a difficult financial situation in the coming months due to the medical expenses incurred from the accident. To help alleviate some of their worries, everyone is invited to the first annual Hope for Helm event, to be held from 6-10 PM on Saturday, November 15 at the United Sports Training Center in West Bradford. There will be dinner and drinks, as well as a silent auction and 50/50 raffle. To purchase tickets to the event and for more info, see: www.hopeforhelm.com.

Halloween Parade & 5K Dash of the Living Dead

Downingtown's Halloween Parade and the 5k Dash of the Living Dead road race both will be held at Saturday, Oct. 25.

The parade begin at 3 PM Beaver Creek Elementary School at 601 W. Pennsylvania Avenue, and east to the Kerr Park Gazebo. Participants must be at the staging area by 2:30 PM, and they will need a number, distributed at the staging area, in order to be judged. They must be part of the parade to be judged. For more details, call 610-269-4203 or send an e-mail to: dtownhalloween@aol.com. The 5k Dash of the Living Dead road race, sponsored by the Downingtown Main Street Association, will begin at 2 PM, before the parade. There will be prizes for the fastest men and women, as well as winners for both genders in various age brackets. To register and for more details on the zombie-themed road race course see: www.runtheday.com/registration/race.

Annual Luncheon

The Old Caln Historical Society will have its annual luncheon at 1:30 PM on Saturday, Nov. 1 at the Thorndale Inn. Reservations close on Oct. 24. Tickets are \$24 per person. Checks, made payable to OCHS, should be sent to: Doreen Jacoby, P.O. Box 72083, Thorndale, PA 19372.

Downingtown Library Programs & Activities

The Film Forum is held at the library at 6:30 PM every second Tuesday of the month. Anyone who enjoys watching and discussing films is welcome to join. Incentives include occasional free movie passes and/or credit for movie rentals. The discussion on November 11 is "Cleopatra" (Liz Taylor version).

A Writer's Group meets at 6:30 PM on the third Thursday of every month. The open forum for adults who are willing to share their writing and participate in critiques.

A Book Club meets at 6:30 PM on every fourth Tuesday. The discussion at the Nov. 25 session will be on Wilkey Collins' *The Moonstone*.

Call the library at 610-269-2741 for more info on any of these programs.

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.