

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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What and Where 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.

Rotary Club seeks volunteers to help move books in 'little red wagons' to new library

The new Downingtown Library facility at 122 Wallace Avenue in the borough is expected to be ready for occupancy by the end of this year. And the Thorndale-Downingtown Rotary Club is

planning and coordinating the move from the old library on East Lancaster Avenue to the new facility.

That's why the Rotary Club is asking members of the community to participate in the Wagon Train by bringing "little red wagons" to transport boxes of books to the new library on Saturday January 3. The snow date is Saturday, January 10.

The Rotary Club also will use the Wagon Train event as a fund raising effort for the new library, by asking participants to get sponsors for their "little red wagons". Prizes will be awarded for the best-decorated wagons, most-uniquely named wagons, and other categories to be announced.

And those that who can't actively participate in the Wagon Train project can play an important role in the historic event by "sponsoring" a box of books to be moved by donating \$5 to the library. Help will also be solicited from the community—from corporate sponsors, local organizations, merchants willing to donate prizes or provide "grub" for the people pulling the wagons. Also, participation in the wagon train event is a great opportunity for school students to fulfill their community service project obligation.

A Boy Scout from the Central Presbyterian Church troop is helping to plan the coordination and packing of book boxes at the library as an Eagle Scout project. Local contractors are being organized to move library's furniture. All of those efforts will occur during the Christmas holidays.

If you can help with the Wagon Train project in any way or wish to be a book box sponsor, please provide information on how you can help by contacting the Thorndale-Downingtown Rotary Club at info@thorndalerotary.org or thorndalerotary@gmail.com. Registration forms and other information will be available by November 10. Information of your interest can also be provided to the Downingtown Library, 610-269-2741.

The Downingtown Library has served local residents for 100 years. So, the move to its bigger quarters is an historic event, especially when you realize that one of a community's strengths is its support of basic human needs, such as library services. The Downingtown community has made a statement in providing a great new facility for its library. By helping with the Wagon Train move to the new facility by the community provides everyone in the community with an opportunity to be a participant in a local historical event.

St. James' rectory had been a Masonic Hall and was once owned by Catholic Church

On several occasions, we had heard that St. James Episcopal Church on East Lancaster Avenue in Downingtown once had some kind of connection with the Catholic Church and a Masonic Lodge during the 19th Century. But we were always mystified about those institutions' connections.

Caroline Ash, a Downingtown native who has spent most of her adult years in the Chicago area, helped clarify some of those mysteries when she recently donated a copy of a history on St. James, which was published in 1994. .

The history notes that the church's cornerstone was laid on June 20, 1843, "on a plot of ground next to the Masonic Hall," and construction of the church was completed four months later.

The Downingtown Masonic Lodge 174, organized in 1821, had occupied the Masonic Hall on East Lancaster Avenue until the Lodge was vacated in 1837, according to the history of its successor, the Williamson Masonic Lodge No. 309, which was established in 1857 and now is located at 210 Manor Ave. in Downingtown. After the Masonic Lodge 174 folded, the building

was purchased by Joshua Hunt, who rented it for several years to Rev. George Kirke, a missionary who ministered at the “Alms House and Jail.”

Although we don't know when Hunt bought the property and converted it into a dwelling, the St. James' history noted that Hunt sold the building to the Roman Catholic Archdiocese in Philadelphia, and that the Hunt family soon bought the property back. Perhaps that buy-back occurred before the archdiocese established St. Joseph's Catholic Church in the west end of the borough in the early 1850s. To support that theory, it was noted in St. James' history that the Episcopal parish bought the former Masonic Hall property in 1851 and turned it into a rectory, after spending \$1,600 on renovations.

The future rectory was significantly larger than the church next door. However, that anomaly was rectified in 1863, when the church was enlarged, and the wings, sanctuary and steeple were built, memorial stained glass windows were installed, and the church building took on the Gothic Revival appearance it still has today.

The rectory was razed in 1955, and Rev. Richard Bartholomew (the pastor from 1962 to 1992) and his family moved into a new rectory at 351 E. Lancaster Ave.

Tom Lee's scrapbook provides details on first LL season in Downingtown

Before Tom Lee became a life-long member of the Alert Fire Co., he was a member of the VFW team in 1950, the first year Little League baseball was played in Downingtown. Tom recently donated the scrapbook, full of articles about that first Little League season, which he donated to the Historical Society.

The sponsors of the four teams in the league that first year, and their managers were: The Loyal Order of Moose, Bus Phillips, manager; Russell Davis, assistant manager; Pepperidge Farm, John Donofrio, manager; Dominic Ore and Francis Tweed, assistant manager; St. Anthony's Lodge, Yerkes Peoples, manager; and Phil Burns and Pepper Petrella, assistant managers; VFW, Chad Campbell, manager; and Don Greenleaf and Jack Helm, assistant managers.

Pepperidge Farm won the league with a 14-4 record in 1953. Carl Smith won batting crown, with a .544 average.

Members of the league's all-star team, selected to play in the Eastern Pennsylvania District playoffs, were: John Chilla, Mike Sciarretta, Francis Valentino, William Stringer, Lloyd Price, Bob Hamilton, Donald Mull, Don Miley, Harry Watson, Tom Woodward, Joe Mingione, Robert Thomas and Nip Westmoreland. Alternates were Eddie Aumiller, Larry Dampman, Bill Davis and Jimmy Charles.

(Editor's Note: Here's some of the information about the founding of the Downingtown Little League in the first edition of the Hist-O-Gram, October 18, 2010:

Several community leaders formed the Downingtown Little League on June 30, 1949. It was the first Little League in Chester County, and one of only six leagues in the Philadelphia District.

The founding officers were: Dr. George Bousum, president; Francis Tweed, vice president; Charles Emery, secretary; Vinton Smedley, treasurer.

Games were played on the vacant lot on the southwest corner of Manor and Pennsylvania Avenues; where a backstop, dugouts, scoreboard and fence were installed.

The first official games, a doubleheader, were played on June 10, 1950. Opening day ceremonies included musical selections by the DHS marching band and an invocation by Father Daniel Hoy of St. Joseph's Catholic Church. Burgess Lee Hamilton threw out the first ball.)

The Kimberton Inn is helping us save Ashbridge House

The Kimberton Inn, located at 2105 Kimberton Road in the sleepy village of Kimberton, was built in 1796. The elegant eatery offers a gourmet seafood-centric menu along with a huge wine list. The ambiance is charming and cozy, with several burning fireplaces and elegant decorations.

Jeff Efgan, who bought the Inn 33 years ago, has assembled a management team that has successfully served clients at the Inn for decades. Chef Jim Trainer, a graduate of the Restaurant School in Philadelphia who has worked at many notable restaurants in the Philadelphia area, has been preparing and developing ideas for tasting menus, private parties, seasonal specials and the solid dinner menu since 1990. And Jason Irrgang has been managing the staff and keeping customer happy for 13 years.

Their goal is to offer a diverse yet balanced cuisine, which reflects a determination to prepare dishes with only the finest ingredients.

Dinner is served from 5:30-9:30 on Tuesday through Saturday evenings, and 5-8:30 on Sundays. Sunday brunch, which includes a three-course meal, can be enjoyed from 11-2.

Reservations can be made by calling 610-933-8148, or via: www.opentable.com/kimberton-inn-reservations-kimberton?rtype=ism&restref=97570.

Jeff Efgan, who bought the Inn 33 years ago, has assembled a management team that has successfully served clients at the Inn for many years. Chef Jim Trainer, a graduate of the Restaurant School in Philadelphia who has worked at many notable restaurants in the Philadelphia area, has been preparing and developing ideas for tasting menus, private parties, seasonal specials and the solid dinner menu since 1990. And Jason Irrgang has been managing the staff and keeping customers happy for 13 years.

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

Other restaurants participating in the raffle are: Thorndale Inn, Amani's BYOB, St. Anthony's Restaurant, The General Warren 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@downingtownareahistoricalsociety.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.downingtownareahistoricalsociety.org. Please help us preserve Ashbridge House, a local historic treasure.

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.downingtowntareahistoricalociety.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.downingtowntareahistoricalociety.org/Histograms.html.

Clip joint will be open on Sunday

The Historical Society's Clip Joint will be open from 1-4 PM on Sunday, November 2, when scads of volunteers will remember that Daylight Saving Time had ended the night before and wake up in time so they can participate in our monthly newspaper clipping and pasting session. The sessions are held 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.

It was at Brandywine and Washington Avenues in Downingtown



Paul Backenstose is a truly perceptive scholar because he was the person to correctly identify the scene in the photo above as Brandywine Avenue, near the intersection of Washington Avenue, in Downingtown. That was the easy part, because the combination of the trolley tracks, the tree-lined street and the church steeple on the upper right section of the turn-of-the-century photo made it a comparatively easy guess. However, several people were perplexed by the buildings along the right side of Brandywine Avenue, which were close to Downingtown United Methodist Church. Those folks apparently are too young to remember that the location of the DNBFirst operations building and its parking lot were occupied many decades ago by several residences and stores, plus the borough jail. And others mistakenly insist that the first building on the left side of the photo was where Wagner's Store was located. And next to the house on the left, what was behind that picket fence at the intersection of Washington Avenue? We suspect we'll hear more on this photo, which was provided to us by Rahn Brackin.

Vince Panetti solved Alert Fire Co. fair site mystery

In last week's Hist-O-Gram, we mentioned that the promotional material for the Alert Fire Co. fair in 1937 didn't note where the fair was held. We wondered about the location because it had to be a site where the Human Rocket Man could be projected a distance of 170 feet. Well, Vince Panetti came to our rescue when he noted in an email: I heard over my 44 years with the fire department that the Alert Fire Co. had their fairs at the corner of Stuart and Manor Avenues, where a field still exists.

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

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.downingtownareaseniorcenter.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.

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.