



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

Vol. 6, No. 17

April 23, 2015

Where and What Is This?



The first person to correctly identify the site in the photo above will be recognized as a truly perceptive scholar. Please send your response to: Info@downingtownareahistoricalsociety.org.

More than 40 people died here during 1918 flu epidemic

The worldwide influenza epidemic--described as the “greatest medical holocaust in history”--reached the Downingtown area in early October 1918, according to articles published that month in the *Downingtown Archive*.

The borough’s schools were closed for several weeks, after over 300 students and six teachers came down with the disease. Churches, fire stations, and lodge rooms also were closed by the Downingtown Board of Health.

By mid-October 1918, the epidemic had subsided, according to the Board of Health, which reported that more than 1,500 area residents had caught the disease and over 40 of them had died from it.

One reason for the rapid decline of the lethality of the disease was because doctors got better at preventing pneumonia that developed after victims had contracted the flu virus.

Surprisingly, many of the dead were healthy adults in their 20s and 30s, whose bodies’ immune systems were ravaged by the virus. About 28 percent of the U.S. population contracted the disease, and more than 500,000 Americans died from it.

What local residents were talking about 68 years ago

Noted below are news items originally published in local newspapers in the latter part of October 1947.

Five members of Downingtown’s **Boy Scout Troop 2** reached the rank of Eagle. They were William Woodward, Joseph Eby, Rodgers Bender, Ronald Hogg and Gordon Carpenter. And promoted to First Class at Parents Night, held in the Boy Scout room at the Alert Fire Co., was Paul Detterline. Also, Scouts accepted into the troop were Pat Pattson, Joe and Jack Woodward, and James Senneff.

The **Glen Moore Improvement Society**, which was inactive during World War II, celebrated its 50th anniversary. Vice President Frank Henderson conducted the meeting, and Eleanor Bartol was elected treasurer, due to the death of William Davis.

Members of **Girl Scout Troop 10**, who won prizes for their costumes at a Halloween party held in the basement of Marshallton School, were Evelyn Bunting, Edith Albertson, Shirley Lamborn, Edith Smyers, Mary Brackbill and June Ellingsworth.

Gen. Hap Arnold, wartime commander of the U.S. Army Air Corps, presented the Legion of Merit award to **Col. Horace Shelmire** of Downingtown. Shelmire had been executive assistant to Gen. Arnold.

Employees of the **Collins and Aikman** mill in the Bondsville section of East Brandywine, who were given service pins at the firm’s annual banquet, included: Fred Fulton, Earl Garrison and Bessie Warren, 20 years; and May Davis, Norman Devine, John Harple, Marion McFalls, Wesley Laird, Morton Myers, George Reber and Chester Pierce, 10 years.

The **DHS football team** lost a heartbreaker when it lost to West Chester 20-12. The Whippets ran a “sleeper” play that resulted in a 63-yard touchdown by DHS end Carmen DiPietro in the opening minute of the game, and the Papertowners made a sensational comeback effort in the fourth quarter. However, West Chester beat Downingtown for the first time since 1943.

The game was so important to West Chester that there was a huge pep rally on the night before the game. It involved more than 1,000 fans who marched through the town behind the

Warrior band, and rousing speeches were delivered by the superintendent of the West Chester school system and the sports editor of the *Daily Local News*.

West Chester scored two TDs in the first half, giving it a 13-6 lead at the intermission. The Warriors struck again in the opening minutes of the third quarter. But Downingtown quarterback Joe Capriotti put his team in scoring position, when his 89-yard punt return ended at the one-yard line. Fullback Paul Dowlin threw a short pass to the Whippet halfback Chuck Garwood to make the score 20-12 at the end of the third quarter. Downingtown rallied in the final stanza when Dan Barrow completed a 30 yard pass to DiPietro to the West Chester 12-yard line. But the rally fizzled and the home team held on for a win.

New Downingtown Library dedicated



Library officials shown, from left to right, at the new Downingtown Library's dedication ceremonies on April 17, were: front row, Scott Hastings and his wife, Debbie Hastings, and Beth Valocchi; second row, board president Deborah Miles, library director Karen Miller, Betsy Hinebaugh, Marcy Hessinger, Mary Holleran; back row, Mary Larsen, Dr. Mario Spoto, Jack Hines, Kathy Mascherino, Ron Dankanich, Carol D'Andrea, and Dan Burgess. The photo was taken by board member Nancy Rolfe. Other board members not in the photo were Francine Dague and Carolyn Marchesani.

It's the Trestle Bridge on the Downingtown-West Bradford border



Carol Nelms is a truly perceptive scholar because she was the first person to correctly identify the site in the above photo as the Trestle Bridge, which spans above the Brandywine Creek and Route 322, along the Downingtown-West Bradford border. The photo was taken by Stacie Hancock of Downingtown.

According to the *Historic American Engineering Record*, the bridge was built in 1903-04 for the Pennsylvania Railroad (PRR). Notable for its height, length and complex geometry, the bridge was part of the PRR's Philadelphia and Thorndale branch. The low-grade freight line was part of the Trenton Cut-Off, which circumvented heavy rail traffic going through Philadelphia during much of the 20th Century.

Between stone abutments, the bridge's length is 1,451 feet. The steel structure has both riveted deck girders and pin-connected trusses. Its tracks were removed in 1990. Now owned by the Norfolk Southern Railroad, the unused bridge has been left to slowly deteriorate since it would cost millions of dollars to tear down.

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, Phil Dague, Rahn Brackin and Donna Capriotti.

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.

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

Annual Chamber dinner

The Downingtown-Thorndale Regional Chamber of Commerce will have its 70th annual dinner at 5 PM on Thursday, April 30 at the Downingtown Country Club. Dr. Mario Spoto will receive the Citizen of the Year award, and Citadel Federal Credit Union will be presented the Business of the Year award. Sharon Hegney of the Downingtown Country Club will receive the Merit Award of Recognition.

See www.dtrcc.com/Documents/2015%20Chamber%20Annual%20Dinner%20-%20Invitation.pdf for ticket information.

Pancake breakfast

The Knights of Columbus Council of St. Joseph's Catholic Church, 340 Manor Ave., Downingtown, will have a pancake breakfast from 6:30 AM to noon on May 3 in the school cafeteria. Besides a wide variety of pancakes, the meal will include sausage, coffee, tea, juice and milk. Baked goods made by parishioners also will be on sale. Adults, \$6; children, 12 and under: \$3. Tickets sold at the door, but you can make a reservation by contacting John McCarraher at jrm227@verizon.net. Proceeds go to the Knights of Columbus Council's charitable activities.

Senior Center's Spring Fling

The Downingtown Area Senior Center will have a Spring Fling at the Lexus of Chester Springs dealership on 400 Pottstown Pike, from 7-11 PM on Saturday, April 25. The fundraiser will include a dinner cabaret, which begins at 9 PM. Cost is \$75 per person. For more details or to purchase tickets, please call Sue McIntyre, associate director, at 610-269-3939, or access:

http://downingtownseniors.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=40:spring-fling&catid=27:spring-fling&Itemid=22.

Bike the Brandywine

Family event presented by the Downingtown Borough Parks & Rec Commission at Kerr Park, from 9 AM to noon Saturday, May 16. Activities include: bike consignment sale at 9 AM; bike safety tips and info from Downingtown Police Dept. at 10 AM; ride from Kerr Park to Johnstown Park and back; 11 AM, music at the gazebo in Kerr Park. For more info, access:

www.downingtown.org/images/BiketheBrandywine%202015.jpg

Nite at the Races

A Kentucky Derby Nite at the Races will be offered on Saturday, May 2 at St. Anthony's Lodge, 259 Church Street, Downingtown. Doors open at 6 PM. Races start after a viewing of the actual Kentucky Derby on TV. Cost: \$25 per person; limited number of tickets available for \$30 at the door. Includes beef and beer & soda. Cash bar. Adults over 21 only. Benefits Downingtown Good Neighbor Christmas Committee. To order tickets go to: www.dtownchristmas.com/Documents/NATR2015/TICKETS-HORSES%20FORM.pdf. For more info, see: www.dtownchristmas.com/.

Old Caln Historical Society events

The Old Caln Historical Society is sponsoring a Craft/Antique/Flea Market to be held on Saturday, May 9, from 9 AM-2 PM on the grounds of the Caln Township Municipal Building, Municipal Drive, Thorndale. For information or to reserve a table, please call 610-384-9496 or 610-384-8153.

Golf outing

The Alert Fire Co. of Downingtown will be host its second annual Golf Outing at the Downingtown Country Club on Monday, May 4. Golfer Registration Deadline is Saturday, April 26. Entry fee for each golfer is \$100. The Outing includes lunch starting at 11:30 AM, shotgun start at 1 PM, greens fee, cart, beverages on the course, awards dinner and various contests and door prizes. For more information and on-line registration, access: www.alertgolfouting.org.

Bus trip to Washington, DC

Phil Dague and the 97th PVI Civil War reenacting group are hosting a "Washington, DC on your own" bus trip on Sunday May 17, and the public is invited. Guests will meet at the Downingtown Library at 122 Wallace Ave. in Downingtown at 5:30 AM where they will board a Krapf luxury coach bus. Upon arrival in our nation's capital at 8 AM, you will be free to explore D.C. on your own. Washington will be bustling with activity on that spring day, including "The Grand Review 150th," a parade commemorating a parade that happened 150 years ago, marking the end of the Civil War. At 4:30 PM, we will start our return trip back to Downingtown, with a stop along the way for dinner (not included), arriving back home at 8:30 PM. It's a long day, but you can nap on the bus! The cost is \$40 per person. If you are interested, please e-mail Phil at PRD1961@gmail.com, or call (610)873-7059.

Registration for soccer players with special needs

The Glenmoore Eagle Youth Association's HIGH 5 soccer program will be held at Fellowship Field #1, 241 Fellowship Road, Chester Springs, from 3-4 PM on Saturdays, from April 11 to May 30. This free program is for players between 5 and 19 years of age who have special needs. We need teens and adults to volunteer as "buddies" to work one-on-one with players. No soccer experience necessary -- just enthusiasm! For more info and to register, go to: www.geyasoccer.org

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 unemployed or underemployed people. The group is entirely conducted by volunteers, and has been at St. Joseph's since 1995. Meets at 7:30 PM on the 2nd & 4th Tuesdays 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.