



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. 33

August 13, 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.

Campaign for just one Post Office in Downingtown got serious in April 1921

Many of our subscribers know that Downingtown wasn't always known as the Good Neighbor community it claims to be today. That's because, for decades, residents of the borough's East and West Wards didn't always get along with each other.

A prime example of that strife occurred in the late 1880s, when residents of the borough's East Ward wanted the Post Office to be re-located to their end of town. Back then, the Post Office was on West Lancaster Avenue, across from the railroad station, because that location provided easy access to the Pennsylvania Railroad, which carried much of the mail to and from the borough. The cantankerous dispute reached a point where Congressman Smedley Darlington tried to settle the problem by convincing the U.S. Postmaster General to establish two postal

facilities in March 1890, making Downingtown the only borough in the nation to have two post offices, for more than 30 years.

That embarrassing municipal wound was finally healed when the new borough hall was dedicated on October 7, 1926, and the municipal building included a leased space for one, consolidated Downingtown Post Office.

But, according to articles in the April 1921 editions of the *Downingtown Archive*, the merging of the two Post Offices wasn't a slam-dunk in 1926.

Merging of the two Post Offices had been brewing for several years, and many of the town's business leaders had publicly acknowledged that two Post Offices in a small town was a "disgrace."

The Post Office issue generated lots of grumbling, but little action, in the community until April 1921, when a postal inspector from Philadelphia scoped out the situation on a visit to the borough and subsequently published a legal notice in the *Archive*. The inspector's notice sought proposals for the "furnishing of suitable quarters for Post Office purposes at Downingtown, Pa., under a lease of five or ten years from proposed consolidation of Downingtown and East Downingtown Post Offices." The proposed lease space was to have at least 1,500 square feet of floor space, with "good daylight," and include closets, urinals (only males handled the mail back then?), and a safe or vault, as well as standard office equipment. The proposal also was to include diagrams of the Post Office's rooms, noting dimensions and window locations. The site also was to be located in the business district and midway between the two existent Post Offices, as well as within 80 rods of a railroad depot.

It's likely, that the re-launching of the Downingtown Businessmen's Club in April 1921 had a lot to do with the U.S. Post Office Department's solicitation of proposals for a suitable space for a centralized Post Office space in the borough that same month. After all, it was the reorganized Business Men's Club that subsequently established the Citizens Holding Co., in 1925, which underwrote construction of the \$43,985 municipal building on a plot of land, purchased for \$700 by borough council, on the south side of Lancaster Avenue, on the edge of the Brandywine.

In addition to creating a central seat of government in the growing town, which would help heal the psychological split in the community, the new Borough Hall included space for a consolidated Post Office, leased at \$1,800 annually, for 10 years. To sweeten the deal, federal postal officials also agreed to provide delivery to all borough residences and businesses at no extra cost. The feds also requested the borough to install street signs throughout the town.

Although the new Borough Hall didn't settle all the East Ward versus West Ward tiffs in Downingtown over the coming decades, it's easy to see why Downingtown's leaders had good reason to celebrate, when the new municipal building was dedicated in 1926.

Other news items in April 1921

Editions of the *Downingtown Archive* in April 1921 also included these news items:

- One of the features of the 34th annual banquet of the DHS Alumni Association was the introduction of the high school's **alma mater**, which was written by Kathryn Hess, Class of 1920. Also at the banquet, it was agreed that \$250 should be spent on a memorial plaque in honor of John Hunsicker, who had been DHS principal for 25 years.
- Speeches at the **DHS commencement exercises** in June were to be offered by valedictorian Virginia Clark, salutatorian Evelyn McKinney, Elsie Clark and Willard Rindlaub. Also, the graduating seniors were allowed to wear gray caps and gowns, instead of traditional black robes and mortarboards.

- A survey of seven plants in Downingtown determined that 137 employees were transported to and from their work place by a trolley. Based on that information, the rejuvenated Downingtown Business Men's Club formed the **Downingtown Development Co.**, a non-profit firm, to stimulate home building in the borough. The company proposed to help any man or family employed in Downingtown, who had saved \$100 or more, and wanted to buy or build home in the borough. Its services included helping with the house plans and specifications, letting of contracts, and arranging for financing.

- To control the costs of building homes in the borough, representatives of Downingtown's **building trades** met and agreed to these reduced hourly rates: carpenters, 75 cents instead of 85 cents; bricklayers, 85 cents instead of \$1.10; and common laborers, 30 cents instead of 55 cents. Officers of the building trades organization were Palmer Hughes, president; Mark Shaw, secretary; and Lewis Snyder, treasurer. Other members included Edge Lewis, John Walton, John Snyder, Harry Deets, John Stine, Ralph Brown, E.A. Worth and Arthur Hess.

- Students from the nine elementary and high schools in the **Uwchlan and West Pikeland Township School Districts** participated in an annual, day-long carnival, which included competitive academic and athletic events. They started with spelling, mathematics and penmanship contests at each grade level, followed by declamation competition, which was similar to a debate, but it could be poetry, debating an argument for or against something. Speakers were judged not just by content, but by performance as well. In the high school singing competition, Lionville High School won over West Pikeland High School. Among grade school vocalists, Lionville Elementary's choral group placed first, while Mount Airy's came in second. There also were baking, sewing, seed identification, cow judging, rope tying and bird box building contests. The relay, sprint, broad jumping, chinning, and high jumping competitions were held after lunch. Total points scored by participating schools were: Lionville High, 87; Lionville Elementary, 83; West Pikeland Grammar, 65; West Pikeland High School, 63; Mount Airy, 49; Lionville 7th and 8th grades, 42; Franklin Hall, 31; Hillside, 17; and Seminary, 15.

What area residents were talking about 52 years ago

Noted below are news items retrieved from local newspapers published in the latter part of July 1963.

- Youngsters from **East Brandywine Baptist Church**, who attended Camp Sunnybrook at Echo Lake in the Poconos, included Randy and Mickey Morris, Chuckie Miller, Robert Marlow, Stephen and Jim Stringer, Carol Ann Burkey, Ronnie Detterline, Beverly and Bob Summers, Kenneth Shaw, John Crane, June and Jeanette Faddis, and Ruth Ann Regener.

- Nine **Girl Scouts from the Lionville area**, who went to Camp Tweeddale for two weeks, were Darlene Windle, Jill Corneal, Penny Renz, Charlene Barton, Helen Bittmann, Caroline Rice, Marjorie Phipps, and Rosalie and Patty Herion.

- Steve Long slammed a three-run homer in the top of the sixth inning to push the **Downingtown All Stars** to their second win in the District 23 Little League Tournament. Downingtown overcame a six-run deficit and beat the Caln All Stars 11-9. Downingtown reached the second round by beating the Coatesville All Stars 5-2. Papertown pitcher Kenny Baen gave up only three hits and three walks.

- Members of the Teeners' Sunday School Class at Downingtown's **First Baptist Church**, who swam and played tennis on an outing at New Holland's Community Park, were Gilbert Cox,

Joy Emery, Diane Shirk, Kathy and Claudette Puccini, Thomas Haas, Diane Kugler, Jay Rambo, John Shank, Beverly Mitchell, Rebecca Hobert and Janis Frazer.

- Winners in the freckle contest at the **East Ward** playground were Kitty Snyder, Debbie Charles, John Nixdorf, Holly Love and Tom Gillespie. And in the decorated bicycle competition at the **Beaver Creek** playground, the winners were Camille DiEuliis, Terri Trader, Geri Jo Wasmuth, Donna Gilmore, Butch Skiles and Billy Shuler. Members of the winning team in the treasure hunt at the **Lionville** playground were Robert and Patty Dunn, Karen Donlon, Greg and Cheryl Hartman, Beth Feeley, James and Linda Peterson, Ernest and Terry Baker, Mary Jane Finney, Arnold Roberts, Carol Koser, Mary Alis Worthington, Jamie Rice and Debbie Carlson. Hat show contest winners at the **Marshallton** playground included Cindy Edwards, Pat, Mike and Dennis Riggins, Randy Ludwick, Linda Sellers, Cheryl Harper and Ray Wood.

Brief, but important

- The **Indiantown School** in the village of Glenmoore in Wallace Township was named after an Indian settlement of wigwams nearby. The first story of the school was built in 1859, and the second story, used initially by local social and beneficial organizations, was added in 1865. The schoolhouse also was used in the 19th Century as a practice hall by the West Nantmeal and Glen Moore Bands. In 1907, the school building was remodeled and a belfry for the school bell (donated by Sara James Templeton) was built. The second floor was the site of the Wallace High School for some 40 years, until it was discontinued in 1942; thereafter the upper level was used by elementary classes.

- The trail at Bondsville Mill Park is open. For a history of the site and info about the trail, see: www.ebrandywine.org/Facilities/Facility/Details/Bondsville-Mill-Park-13.

Our Wish List

Here's our Wish List, which notes stuff the Historical Society especially needs to reach our goals. Obviously, we'd also love to have ANY artifact or printed material, which has a Downingtown connection, as well. We're starting our pursuit with a request for these items:

- All DHS yearbooks published since 1964.
- A digital SLR camera (one that's more than a basic point-and-shooter) which we'll use to photograph donated artifacts in our archival collection. That means we'll need one that's capable of taking pictures, which include tiny details.

If you need more info about either of these requests, please send an email to:

Info@downingtowntareahistoricalociety.org. And if you wish to bring ANY item that has a Downingtown connection to Ashbridge House, our 306-year-old headquarters on Route 30, next to the Chick-Fil-A restaurant, we're open 1-4 PM every Sunday afternoon.

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.

It's the Humphrey Marshall house in Marshallton



Jack Hines is a truly perceptive scholar because he was the first person to correctly identify the house in the photo above as the Humphrey Marshall house, at 1407 W. Strasburg Road in downtown Marshallton. The Georgian-style house, which is on the National Register of Historic Places, was built by Marshall in 1773-1774. The house included the botanical garden, which had native and exotic plants, and in 1785, he wrote the first American book on native trees and shrubs.

Jack says he worked for Campbell Weir on the 2.7-acre property, when it was a multi-family dwelling about 20 years after Weir bought it in 1940s. Jack claims Weir was a stickler about maintaining equipment. "He always checked the equipment when you put it away, before you got paid. If you mowed, the tractor had to be greased, filled with fuel, and put away properly. The sickle bar had to be put on blocks, greased, knives sharpened and tightened, and ready for the next time. He didn't bother to look at the work; if you took care of the equipment, he believed that you would do the work properly." Jack also recalls building a boat from old fence boards that were replaced on the property. Weir was so impressed with those efforts, he bought mahogany at Hoffman's Lumber so Jack could build another boat.

Weir bequeathed the property to the Chester County Historical Society, which sold it in about 1990, with easements to protect the house.

Free ads for Non-Profits

Chicken Bar-B-Que

The Alert Fire Co. will have its annual Chicken-Bar-B-Que dinner and bake sale from 4-7 PM on Saturday, August 22 at the firehouse, 122 W. Pennsylvania Ave., Downingtown. Dinners (eat-in or take-out) include a half chicken, corn on the cob, baked potato, apple sauce, dinner roll, dessert and beverage, all for just \$13. There will be advance ticket sales at the firehouse on Wednesday nights from 7-9 PM and on August 22. For more details, see the Alert's website, www.alertfire.org or their Facebook page, www.facebook.com/alertno1?ref=hl.

Community Day in E. Brandywine

The East Brandywine Park and Recreation Commission's Community Day on Saturday, August 22 at the Community Park, 444 Dilworth Road, will begin with a 5 K Run, Walk & Kids Run for the Parks at 9:30 AM (See: <https://secondwind.webconnex.com/ebtparks5k>), followed by these events and activities from 11 AM to 3 PM. They will include antique and classic cars, crafters, vendors, great food, music, pony and hay rides, bingo, speed cup stacking, Shriners Clowns on Cycles, Stubby the Helicopter, police and fire demonstrations, Civil War cavalry, Chester County Sheriff's K9 Unit, karate demonstrations, Rita's Water Ice, fun tennis activities, plus lots of kids' stuff. New this year will be some members of the Uptown String Band, who will have costumes on display for you to see, touch, try on and have your picture taken. They will also perform some of their traditional mummies' songs. Organizations which want to be a part of this year's Community Day, contact Sandy Lammey or Dave Summers by leaving a message at the township office at 610-269-8230 or send an email to: parkandrec@ebrandywine.org.

Teri's Run

The 14th annual Teri's Run and Twilight Walk will be on Friday, September 12, beginning on Green Street in Downingtown. The event is dedicated to the memory of Downingtown's Teri Valocchi and all those who have lost their battle with Scleroderma. This year's Run will also raise funds for research and raise awareness of Chiari Malformation, Syringomyelia. The Run donated \$15,000 last year to the National Scleroderma Foundation, and it has raised over \$125,000 over the past 13 years for research into the cause and someday a cure for this debilitating disease. The Kids' Run begins at 6:30 PM, followed at 7 PM by the 5K Run and the 1.5 mile Walk. The deadline for pre-registering (\$25) is August 28. Registration cost after August 28 is \$30 for adults, \$20 for students 18 and under, and \$5 for the Kids Run. For more info, see: www.terisrun.org/

Caln Community Day

The Caln Township and the Caln Township Business Group are co-sponsors of the 9th annual Caln Community Day, from 11 AM to 3 PM on Saturday, Sept. 12 at the Caln Municipal Park in Thorndale. The event will include live entertainment, food, a children's area, a flea market sponsored by the Thorndale United Methodist Church and much more. New this year will be a Caln Police vs Thorndale Fire Department softball game at 2 PM.

Clam Bake

The Lionville Fire Co. will have its annual clam bake from 1-7 PM on Sunday, Sept. 6 at the firehouse on Village Avenue. Tickets (\$40 for adults) can be ordered via: www.ticketriver.com/event/15728. Food includes 3 dozen clams, plus corn on the cob, hamburgers, hot dogs, deli salads, clam chowder and drinks including beer. Tickets for kids between 3 and 12 are \$20; they don't include clams or beer. Kids under 3 are free. Activities include live entertainment and a horseshoe tournament.

Summer Jam

The last of a series of three Summer Jams will be held from 5-9 PM on Friday, August 28 in the Mill Alley Pocket Park, along East Lancaster Avenue, Downingtown. The event, sponsored by Kimberton Whole Foods, Synergema and the School of Rock, will include food, crafts and music. For more info, see: www.downingtownmainstreet.com/calendar.

Candlelight Dinner

Downingtown Borough's Historic Commission is holding a Log House Candlelight Dinner for 4 raffle to benefit the placement of the Minquas Cannon at the Veterans Memorial in Kerr Park. Winner will win a Dinner for 4 people at the Log House in early November. The dinner will be catered by St. Anthony's Restaurant. Ticket cost: \$50. To purchase tickets, please contact Val at Borough Hall via: Vdilugi@downingtown.org or 610-269-0344, ext. 200.

Lions Golf Tournament

A Lionville Lions Club's golf outing will be held on Monday, August 17 at the Downingtown Country Club. Registration begins at 7:30 AM, with coffee & Dunkin' Donuts, followed by an 8:30AM "Shotgun Start". The cost of the event is \$100. This price includes 18 holes of golf including cart, refreshments on the greens and an all-you-can-eat buffet. Awards for Closest-to-the-Hole and 1st and 2nd place Teams will be presented during lunch. Proceeds from this event will help support the Chester County Association for the Blind, the Downingtown Lord's Pantry, Downingtown Senior Center, and other Lions charities.

Blood Drive

There will be a Red Cross drive from 1-6 PM on Friday, Aug. 21 at Downingtown Borough Hall annex building. See www.downingtowntown.org to register.

Art & Craft Show

Downingtowntown Borough's Historic Commission will hold its annual Log House Art & Craft Show on Saturday, September 19, from noon – 4 PM at Kerr Park. Spaces are \$25. Vendor applications and information can be found on the website: www.downingtowntown.org/LogHouseArtCraftShow.html

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.

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: JPC Cheryl@verizon.net.

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.