



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 and What Is This?



The first person to correctly identify the site in the photo above and what was going on when the photo was taken will be recognized as a truly perceptive scholar. Please send your responses to Info@downingtownareahistoricalsociety.org.

Local news in the latter part of December 1962

Here's what area residents were talking about 53 years ago, according to local newspapers.

The **Downingtown Motor Inn's** 1896 House Restaurant was charging \$4 for a complete Christmas dinner. And the \$3 per couple, charged by the **Downingtown Moose Lodge** for its New Year's Party covered hats, noisemakers and novelties.

The Youth Fellowship group at **East Brandywine Baptist Church** put out their first edition of *The Ebb*, a newspaper covering the church's activities. Clem and Libby Regener were the advisors.

Soloists in the presentation of Handel's Messiah at a **DHS Christmas concert** were Wilma Matlack, Miriam Ezrah, Nancy Martin, Susan Whittaker, Robert Crane and Charles Alexander. The concert began with members of the Boys' Chorus, dressed like waiters, marching down the aisles of the auditorium while singing "The Boar's Head" carol.

Officers of the Sunday School of **Bethel AME Church**, Downingtown, were Percy Miller, superintendent; Hezekiah Henderson, assistant superintendent; and Mrs. Ida Miller, organist. Recitations were given by Clara Shuler, Deborah and Lamont Wilkerson, Robert Horsey, Daniel Asparagus, Sara and Sharon Walls, Janet Miller and Paula Price during Bethel's Christmas program.

Young ladies from the Chester Springs area, who were taken into **Girl Scout Troop 252**, were Becky English, Terry Merkle, Wendy Weikel, Noreen Mahoney, Ruth Ott, Polly Quigley, Alice Smurthwaite, Donna Mitchell and Ann Lamb. Those who earned swimming badges were Nancy Sload, Harriet Wentz, Ann Barrow, Katie Hallman, Joy Henssler, Cheryl Miller, Susan Seel and Donna Twaddell.

Members of the **DHS cross-country team**, coached by Charles Ax, who received awards at the fall sports assembly, were Jeff Smith, Lloyd Asparagus, Charles Alexander, Lee Hayes, David Downing, Randy Dietrich and Ronald Brinton.

Installed as officers of the **Ladies Auxiliary of the East Brandywine Fire Co.** were Mrs. Pauline Moses, president; Mrs. Mae Swarner, vice president; Mrs. Hannah Harner, recording secretary; Helen Laird, financial secretary; Mrs. Gwen Dague, treasurer; and Mrs. Helen Frazer, chaplain.

Participants in a play, put on by the Youth Fellowship group at **Glen Moore Methodist Church**, were Mary Ann and Nancy Harple; Linda, Mary Jane and Patty Pizii; John Miller; Raymond Evans; Carol Williams; and Gary Keenan.

Students at Marshallton Elementary School, who did well in physical fitness testing, were Harvey Nicholson, Helen Freyberger, Justine Blackwell, Marshall Busby and Arlene Brown.

New officers, presented at the **Williamson Masonic Lodge's** annual banquet, included Thomas Peazzoni, senior warden; Fred Crosson, junior warden; Robert McClure senior deacon; David Whittaker, junior deacon; Philip Stocker, senior master of ceremony; William Broomell, junior master of ceremony; George Brookover, pursuivant; and Thomas Philips, chaplain.

Featured in the Christmas Play, put on by **St. Joseph's School** students, were Andrew Cozzone as Santa; Kathleen Cozzone as Nimble; and Carl Valente as Wimble. Mrs. Margareta Helm was accompanist; Mrs. Joseph Mento was the dance instructor; Peter Tecce did the snow decorations; and John Morris handled the lighting.

The **Glen Moore Fire Company's** new officers were Edwin Evans, president; Frank Lutz, vice president; Thomas Trego, secretary; William Payne, treasurer; Thomas Miller, financial secretary; John Reber, fire chief; Thomas Reber, first assistant chief; James Griffin, second assistant chief; Edward Moore, trustee; and Leonard Bjorkman, chaplain.

A presentation of “The Christmas Story” was made by these **Brandywine Wallace School** students: David Lyman, Debbie Mertz, Susan Glazebrook, Paula Raysor and Bobby Meyers. And fourth graders who sang solos were Becky Wilson, Becky Evans, Buddy Thompson, Fred Smith, Adrian Keenan and Steven Fetters.

Neat items donated to our archival collection in 2014



Vance Usher donated many items to the Historical Society last year, and he brought us a lot more neat things in 2014. In addition to slot cars and toy space vehicles from his youth, Vance also contributed a 1914 Bell Telephone directory for the Philadelphia area, which included several phone numbers for Downingtown; several bottles found in the Halfway House on East Lancaster Avenue, before it was razed in 1968; and the mill race intake valve apparatus shown in the photo above, which had been used for decades in the mill race that ran behind the Usher’s family’s home on East Lancaster Avenue in Downingtown.



Marjorie Lawn Gazzola, DHS Class of 1957, who now lives in the suburbs of Washington, DC, gave the Historical Society a copy of “The Gee Family Book,” an 82-page genealogical study of her ancestry in England and the U. S. Marjorie is a descendant of Billy Gee, who emigrated from England in 1898 to the Thorndale-West Bradford area. One of the many photos in the book is the one on the left, which shows Marjorie’s grandmother, Mary Ann (Molly) Gee, in 1903, while employed as a nanny for the child in the photo, who is Thomas Parke. That little boy in a dress, which was typical in that era, grew up and became a prominent Downingtown physician.

Neat items donated to our archival collection in 2014 (Continued)

Members and friends of the Historical Society donated many interesting items to our archival collection in 2014. Noted below are just some of the unique items, related to the Downingtown area, they donated last year. Those items and their donors included:

Marsha Anderson-Her father's (James Anderson) U.S. Army Air Corps uniform and discharge papers from World War II.

Caroline Ash-History of St. James Episcopal Church, 1994.

Bill and Tom Brookover-Photos of 1931 DHS football team, DHS Class of 1932, copy of May 30, 1932 edition of the *Downingtown Archive*, 1949 Downingtown City Directory.

Donna Capriotti-Several 1950s editions of St. Joseph's Catholic Church Bulletin.

Kathy Conahan-DHS 1970s basketball game passes, spirit tags, Whippet tea towel.

Gail Miller Davis-Deeds from 1874, 1877 and 1923 for 340 Washington Ave., Downingtown.

Michael DiLuigi-Baseball uniform advertising DiLuigi's Shoe Repair.

Downingtown Area Chamber of Commerce-Downingtown Jaycees' 1967 Survey, 1962 Post Office dedication program, 1965 WFIL film *Salute to Downingtown*.

Downingtown-Thorndale Rotary Club-Banner, bell and gavel from Downingtown Rotary Club.

Rena Francella-Downingtown Annual Report, 1955 and 1960.

Ernie Jameson-Numerous directories and annual reports from First Baptist Church.

Dr. William King-Several DHS Class of 1946 reunion photos and directories, reprint of Charles Pennypacker's 1909 *History of Downingtown*.

Robert Klinger-Many photos, slides and films from when his father, Harold Klinger, was the DHS agriculture teacher and Future Farmers of America advisor for many years.

Tom Lee-Scrapbook of articles about the early days of the Downingtown Little League.

Debbie Dunn Lutchkus-Costume dresses she and sister, Patricia, wore in 1959 Centennial Parade.

Cynthia Lyman-Downingtown Woman's Club stock certificate, Downingtown Rotary Club banners, plaques and gavel.

Ronald Meacham-1960 DHS letterman's sweater, Witmer map of Downingtown.

Michael Mento-Downingtown 1897 and 1927 Directories, Copies of the six Alumni Association Newsletters, sent to all members of DHS Alumni serving in military during World War II.

Phoenixville Area Historical Society-Scrapbook with articles covering the extension of the West Chester trolley line to Downingtown.

Ellen Plank-Newspapers published on major historic occasions in late 20th and early 21st Centuries, History of Chemical Leaman Tank Lines.

Iva and Olin Siever-1917 Downingtown City Directory, 1938 Chester County Handbook.

Ronald Tipton-DHS band emblem, programs for DHS concerts, plays, etc., many editions of the DHS *Blue and Gold* newspapers from 1950s.

Tri-County Historical Society-Photos of the YMCA Camp's early days.

Ben Valocchi-Minutes and other records of the Downingtown Area Senior Center, 2003-2010.

Mark Walters-Several DHS All Sports banquet programs.

Austin Windle-Booklet for dinner honoring Chester County men who served in World War I.

Roxanne Wisler-Photo of the 1912-13 DHS basketball team.

Madeleine Woodruff-Photos of 1918-1919 and 1919-1920 DHS basketball teams, plus 1920s era photo of Villanova basketball team, when John Francella played there.

We are most thankful to those who donated all the items to the Historic Society.

Downingtown area news in the fall of 1917

Noted below are news items retrieved from the *Downingtown Archive* 98 years ago.

The first Liberty Loan war bond campaign conducted in August 1917 in Downingtown had reached \$65,000, and the second stage of that effort, in October 1917, was projected to total \$100,000.

After the U.S. entered World War I, a drill corps, known as the Home Guards, was formed in Downingtown, and soon two squads of the 36 local young men were drilling and receiving martial training twice a week at the Minquas Fire Co. Downingtown's Hancock GAR Post provided old Springfield rifles for the drill corps to use. The Minquas gymnasium committee requested that members of the drill squads wear rubber-soled shoes. And drill corps members who wished to be promoted to the rank of corporal were advised to buy a copy of the Drill Manual at Hutchison's Drug Store, to prepare for the exam. Also, formation of a Cadet Corps at Downingtown High School was proposed.

And the Minquas Fire Co. was where boys between 11 and 18 could participate in gymnasium classes three times a week for only a dollar a year. Since that year-old program was so successful, a senior exercise class for adult men was being formed.

Enrollment at the high school had increased to 165 students. The ninth grade had to be split into two sections.

And the 1917 football season got underway with a 7-6 loss to Phoenixville. The game was played in the infield of the race track (at the intersection of Brandywine Avenue and Boot Road) because the field behind the High School on West Lancaster Avenue in the borough was determined to be 40 feet short of 100 yards. The following week, Downingtown defeated Coatesville 20-6 in another home game at the race track.

Red Cross volunteers were now working in rooms at the Improvement building (at West Lancaster and Stuart Avenues). Among the items they produced in September 1917, which were shipped to Red Cross headquarters in Philadelphia were: 27 surgical shirts, 10 bath wrappers, 10 sets of pajamas, 8 shoulder wraps, 10 pair of bed socks, 200 compresses, 300 sponges, 115 slings, and 87 abdominal binders.

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.

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 and Rahn Brackin.

Thank you, Thank you, Thank you, Thank you



Marybeth Fusco is a truly perceptive scholar because she was the first of many people who correctly identified a similar photo of Ashbridge House, our 306-year-old headquarters on Route 30 in East Caln. The repointing of the leaking stone wall on the east side of the house was expected to be completed by the end of this week, weather permitting. We would not have been able to undertake this major repair project without the fantastic donations made by our members and friends. Thank you very much.

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

Bike Rack Design Contest

In a collaborative effort between the Borough of Downingtown, Downingtown Main Street Association and the Downingtown Area School District Engineering Department to provide bike-friendly racks in the Borough of Downingtown, *the Student Designed Bike Project invites School District students to design a bike rack. It can be historical in nature, artistic, fundamental or just plain fun. Any materials—such as markers, crayons, colored pencils—can be used, and the design can be done on a computer, made with pipe cleaners or popsicle sticks, etc. Please read the information sheet for other details. The top 20 designs selected by the judges will be turned over to volunteer technology students in the School District high schools. They will model and prototype the 20 finalists' designs. One (or more) of those designs will be selected to be turned into bike racks.*

[Click here for more information](#) and an entry blank. All designs should be turned into your DASD public school's art teacher by Wednesday, January 14.

Program on Golda Meir

Ann Atkins, author and historian, will talk about Golda Meir's early years, before she was Israel's prime minister, at the West Caln Historical Society's meeting at 7 PM on Tuesday, January 20, at the West Caln Municipal Bldg., 721 W. Kings Hwy., Wagontown. The public is welcome.

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.