



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

Interesting local history, accessed from our archives

www.downingtownareahistoricalociety.org

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

Vol. 6, No. 31

July 30, 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@downingtownareahistoricalociety.org.

What area residents were talking about 52 years ago

Noted below are news items retrieved from local newspapers published in early July 1963.

- Uwchlan residents and the township's supervisors expressed frustration when the secretary of the State Department of Highways **denied a request for a traffic light at the intersection of Routes 100 and 113** because an investigation of the issue had determined that "the volume of traffic passing through the intersection (less than seven vehicles per minute between 4-5 PM) is not sufficient to justify the operation of stop and go signals....However, due to the apparent accident potential at this location, we feel that the installation of flashing beacons is justified." But residents claimed that there had been two fatal accidents in two months at the intersection, despite the fact that stop signs were already were installed there. The residents also said the secretary's vehicle count during peak traffic hours was inaccurate. The supervisors suggested to Mrs. Samuel Windham, a township resident and a school teacher, that she should circulate a petition, in favor of a stop light, and forward it to Harrisburg.

- The Downingtown Joint Elementary School Board gave a committee of three **West Bradford Township school directors** authority to get appraisals from two independent realtors on a tract, which, if purchased, would be the site of a new elementary school with a capacity of 800 pupils. And the State Health Department had to approve the site's sewage treatment capability, since West Bradford had no public sewer system and the school had to be built near a water supply to serve a treatment plant. The new school would eventually replace the Marshallton School.

- Downingtown Council approved changes in the **borough's health code, regarding quarantine periods for childhood diseases**, so they would conform with state requirements. The seven-day quarantine period for German measles was eliminated, while the periods for measles and mumps was cut from ten to seven days. The quarantine whooping cough was kept at four weeks. The conflict between the borough and state codes arose last winter in the Downingtown Joint School District, when children from surrounding townships, who were governed by the state code, were not sent back to school until the borough's quarantine period was completed.

- **Downingtown National Bank** dedicated its new branch in the east end of the borough.
- Newly elected officers of the **Downingtown Optimist Club** were Donald Collier, president; Jack Stine, vice president; and Glenn Echhoff, secretary-treasurer.

- The new **Downingtown East Garden Apartment complex** (now known as the Downingtown Commons) at 335 E. Lancaster Ave., was charging \$92 a month for a one-bedroom apartment.

- Girls from Downingtown's **First Baptist Church** who spent a week at Sandy Cove Camp were Jean Casella, Janis Frazer, Joan Haas, Susan Ashenfelder, Turie Hayes and Sandra Mattison.

- One of the ways members of **Hopewell Methodist Church**, East Brandywine, celebrated its 180th anniversary by wearing period costumes. Those who were recognized for their vintage attire included Mrs. Edward Plank, most authentic (her grandmother's wedding dress); Mrs. Arthur Kring, most original; Mr. and Mrs. Peter Smith, best looking couple; Timothy Bryant and Kathy Kring, best looking child couple; and Lynn Bower, prettiest child.

- Members of the **Alert Fire Co.** team, which won the tug-of-war competition at the West Bradford Fire Co. Carnival were Charles Young, Francis Hill, Richard Ruth, Hayes Clark Jr., Robert Ruark, Robert Sylott, Lewis Dewees, John Trego, George Ruark, Sonny Trego, and Walter and Harold Trego.

- Teachers and helpers at the **Marshallton Methodist Church's** Vacation Bible School included Mary Jane Martin, Delores McClure, Rose Liney, Barbara Blakney, Dorothy Ludwick, Susan James, Betty McClure, Cathy Obert, Carol Smyers, Nancy Jordan, Nancy Busby, Mrs. William Keeler, Edith Young, Helen Hall and Shirley Robinson.
- College credits were being offered by **Penn State** for those who completed 16-week freshmen and sophomore level courses at DHS. The courses included English, history, speech, education, chemistry, mathematics, psychology, political science and art.
- A Chester County judge ruled that Fred Schubert, the developer of the "**Pickering Hunt Estates**" could no longer use that name for his development on Route 113 in West Pikeland. The ruling was based on the right of the plaintiff to protect its name, the Pickering Hunt, a licensed, well-known fox-hunting club, which had a clubhouse within eight miles of Schubert's development.
- The staff conducting **Downingtown Area Summer Recreation** programs at playground sites were: Jeanne Emery, Mary Ann Phillips and Douglas Wolfe, East Ward School; Grace Bennett, Marshallton School; Bonita Plank, Gwen Habecker and Ray DiSerafino, Beaver Creek School; and Nancy Kohlhas, Linda Hadfield and Ronald Meacham, Lionville Elementary School.

News in the March 1921 editions of *The Archive*

- Downingtown residents overwhelmingly approved of a proposal for the borough to **borrow \$50,000** as its contribution to the paving of Lancaster Avenue. Those in favor of the loan in a referendum totaled 660; only 124 voters opposed it. Most of the paving project's cost was covered by the State Highway Department and the County.
- A major storm, **purportedly a tornado**, struck the Downingtown area and did major damage to properties in the borough. The entire roof of the Frank Miller Paper Co. office on Brandywine Avenue was torn off; a shed at the Pennsylvania Railroad station was blown across the tracks and deposited on the roof of the Pennsylvania House Hotel; the roofs of a dozen houses on Church Street in the Johnstown section were destroyed; farm silos in rural townships were blown over; and a two-horse wagon on William Mendenhall's farm was blown onto the roof of his barn.
- The **DHS basketball team** beat Coatesville 29-27, making it a contender for the county championship. And the high school **track team**, coached by Ray Greenleaf, were in training for six meets, including the Penn Relays in Philadelphia.
- Borough resident Samuel Lewis was appointed as **Downingtown's police chief**, to replace Tommy Gray who had resigned after serving on the police force for 26 years. Lewis had been in the U.S. Army for six years, including service as a medic during the brief war with Mexico and suffered several wounds while involved in five major battles in France during the First World War. *Editor's note: Gray's resignation respite apparently didn't last long. A newspaper article in February 1927 noted that he was resigning as Downingtown's police chief once again, at age 75.*

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 old Lionville Firehouse on Village Avenue



Marybeth Fusco is a truly perceptive scholar because she was the first person to correctly identify the site in the photo above as the old Lionville Firehouse on Village Avenue. The fire company was formed in 1911, and beginning in 1915, it stored its first, hand-pulled pumper, in a one-story, frame garage in the village, according to “Uwchlan Township: 300 Years Above the Valley,” published by the township’s Historical Commission in 2011. The pumper was replaced in 1923 by a motorized fire truck. In 1929, the firehouse shown above was built for \$9,000, on land purchased for \$500 from Christian Oberholser. This original fire station is still a part of the company’s facilities, and company meetings are still held in the original, second floor meeting room, according to: www.lionvillefire.org/content/firehistory/. An addition to the firehouse, consisting of four apparatus bays, numerous offices and storage areas, kitchen, and banquet facility, was designed and constructed by the members of the department in the 1960s. Another addition, was built in 1994.

Clip joint will be open this Sunday

The Historical Society's Clip Joint will be open from 1-4 PM on Sunday, August 2. So if you want to spend a delightful afternoon on Sunday, catching up on the local gossip, as well as clipping and pasting newspaper articles, you're invited to come to Ashbridge House, our 306-year-old 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 convenience.

Brief, but important

- Remember when seemingly blood-thirsty women competed in Roller Derby on TV back in the 1960s? Well, the sport is back, and the Brandywine Roller Girls, who practice at the Caln Skating Center on West Lancaster Avenue, will compete in the playoffs in Cleveland next month. For more details on the Roller Girls, see: www.dailylocal.com/lifestyle/20150727/brandywine-roller-girls-head-to-play-offs.
- And Downingtown's Diamond Dogs won the Region 3 American Legion Baseball title. For details, see: www.dailylocal.com/sports/20150722/legion-dominant-performance-by-jarema-leads-downingtownto-region-3-title.

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@downingtowntareahistoricalsociety.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.

Here's how YOU can receive a Hist-O-Gram every week

If you occasionally receive a pass-along copy of our Hist-O-Gram from a subscriber, you can receive a copy of our FREE Hist-O-Grams every week by accessing our website: www.downingtowntareahistoricalsociety.org, and typing your 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.

Free ads for Non-Profits

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, 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.

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: Vdiluigi@downingtowntown.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. Checks can be made out to: Lions Golf Tourney and mailed to: Lionville Lions Club, 6 W. Lancaster Ave., Downingtown, PA 19335. Deadline for the receipt of checks is August 3rd. 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.

Summer Jam

The second of a series of three Summer Jams will be held from 5-9 PM on Friday, July 31 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.downingtowntownmainstreet.com/calendar.

Art & Craft Show

Downingtown 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: JPCheryl@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.