



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. 20

May 14, 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.

No dancing, no more prancing highlighted news published in *The Archive* 86 years ago

No school-sponsored dances and the auctioning of the Alert's horses were two of the topics covered by the *Downingtown Archive* in the spring of 1919.

The School Board bowed to a "pietist minority" in the borough, and shot down efforts by students' parents who wanted the ban against dances to be lifted so the high school could have prom.

And Downingtown's **Alert Fire Co.** announced that it was going to conduct an auction at the fire house on Downing Avenue. Items sold, including some things that were donated by members and supporters, in addition to firefighting equipment, were: a pair of gray horses ("Ped" and "Gib"), a dump wagon, two farm wagons, a jump-seat wagon, a 3-seated wagon, a 2-horse cart, a sleigh, a cultivator, an extension ladder, pigs, chickens, a wheelbarrow, a grindstone, a butchering outfit and a copper kettle. Proceeds from the auction were used to help pay for the new, \$10,000 Seagrave fire engine, which had been delivered in early May, but the total funds raised so far was about \$4,000 less than the purchase price.

The property, formerly occupied by the Cohansey Glass operation and briefly used by the Downingtown branch of the now-bankrupt Philadelphia Brass Works on Chestnut Street in the east end of the borough, was sold for \$50,000 to the **Eagle Smelting Co.**, a New York firm.

Medals were presented to Anna Long, valedictorian, and Mary Smedley, salutatorian at the **DHS commencement**. And John Francella, the first Italian-American boy to graduate from the high school, received cuff links and a stickpin with the high school's seal. Francella also was the leading scorer on the 14-9 DHS basketball team, and he went on to play basketball for Villanova. The senior class went on a two-day sight-seeing trip to Harrisburg and Gettysburg.

There were three **Boy Scout** troops in Downingtown, back then. Dr. Joseph Huggins was the district chairman, and Austin Moore was the secretary. Troop 1 was nearly four years old; Troops 2 and 3 were recently formed. Members of the three troops were invited to a summer camp at Icedale, which cost each boy \$4 per week to attend.

The **Downingtown Home and School League** was conducting a campaign to raise \$1,300 to equip the playgrounds at East Ward and West Ward Schools with swings, see-saws, and sliding boards. Soliciting funds so a Victrola record player could be purchased for both of those schools also was underway.

Luther Leaguers were building a tennis court behind **Messiah Lutheran Church** on West Lancaster Avenue.

The Philadelphia textile manufacturing firm, which bought a property on Wallace Avenue in the borough, was to be known as the **Downingtown Woolen Mill**. It was projected to have 150 employees, mostly "girls."

Local news items published in early November 1947

Noted below are news items, which were originally published in local papers in the early part of November 1947.

People could do some gambling and they could dance to the music of Chris Sanderson and the Pocopson Boys, but the major attraction at the Monte Carlo Night, sponsored by the Downingtown Lions Club at the Alert fire hall, was an opportunity to watch one of those new-fangled **television sets** in operation.

Only 16 voters came to the polls to elect the following **Uwchlan Township** candidates: George Thompson, supervisor; Emmett Gordon, auditor; Edwin Smedley, school board; Horace Roberts, judge of elections; James Thackeray, election inspector; Russell Allison and Isabell Acker, justices of the peace.

A public sale was held at the dairy farm of **William Hannum** on Route 113, Downingtown. In addition to 17 head of Guernsey and Jersey cattle, items sold included a corn harvester, 300 bushels of hand-husked corn, 10 tons of baled hay and a DeLaval milking machine.

Details on how students from a small section of Caln Township, which had been annexed by the borough of Downingtown in June, would be absorbed into the Downingtown School District were resolved at a meeting between of the **Downingtown** and **Caln School Boards**.

Mothers of high school and junior high musicians organized a support group, whose officers were Mrs. Frank Lenhardt, president; Mrs. Francis Helm, secretary; Mrs. Elmer Schrupf, treasurer; and Mrs. Thomas Deets, publicity chairman. The group's initial project was raising money to buy new **marching band uniforms**. The old band uniforms were to be sold. (*Editor's Note: We would love to add a set of those band uniforms to our archival collection*).

Also, proceeds from a "**corn game**," conducted at Andrew Brookover's Romansville farm, were to be donated to the marching band uniform fund. (*Editor's Note: Anyone know what a corn game was?*)

Officers elected to lead **Downingtown Methodist Church's** Golden Rule Bible Class were Helen Nelms, president; Eleanor Detterline, vice president; Arlene Hoskins, secretary; Mary Jane Detterline, treasurer; Diane Kline, publicity chairman; Betty Lou Hope and Joyce Scarborough, welfare co-chairmen; Virginia Brown and Amy Langham, ways and means; Patsy Fisher and Mabel Summers, hospitality and programs.

Prizes were awarded to these youngsters for the unique costumes they wore at the **Upper Uwchlan Home and School League's** Halloween party, held in the Masonic Hall in Byers: Eileen Mercer, prettiest; Janet Robinson, funniest; and Flora Lee Robinson, most original.

And winners in the costume competition at a Halloween party, sponsored by the Mothers Club of **Indiantown School** and held in the Glen Moore fire hall, included: Billy Rigg, Judy Reber, Ruth Ferrell, Leonard Canella, Merle Hannum and Joe Mason.

Also, members of the Friendship Club of **Central Presbyterian Church**, Downingtown, who won prizes for their costume at a Halloween party, were Mrs. George Nixdorf, funniest; Margaret Worth, most original; and Mrs. Newlin Moore, hardest-to-guess.

What local residents were talking about 68 years ago

Noted below are snippets of news found in the May 29, 1947 edition of *The Archive*.

Behind the superb pitching of Butch DiBernardi and Al Pizii's four hits, Downingtown's Glasstown team cracked Guthriesville 10-2 in the Community Baseball League. The Guthriesville squad held a benefit dance at the Glen Moore Fire Co. for "Whitey" Beam, who was hospitalized after he broke his leg in two places.

The 65-piece DHS band, under the baton of Ralph Lennox, played a concert, sponsored by the Downingtown Lions Club, which was broadcast on WDEL, a Wilmington radio station.

Nancy Jones and Terry DiBerardinis were the two contestants from the Downingtown area in the Miss Chester County competition. The contest was conducted in the Acorn building on Chestnut Street in the borough.

Mildred Bicking's shop, at 231 E. Lancaster Ave., Downingtown, was selling the latest summer dresses, and Amos Miley, 101 Pennsylvania Ave., had a clock repair service.

Robert Miller, Herbie Lee and Ralph Miller of West Ward School were the winners in a marbles tournament.

Brief but important

1. We noted in the May 7 Hist-O-Gram that the **Where and What Is This?** photo of a farm site, which was first published in the April 30 Hist-O-Gram, had been identified as the Clara Fox farm. However, several people have informed us that the site also was known as the Griffith farm during the mid-20th Century. Perhaps the confusion is because the farm was leased to, or owned by, the Griffiths. If you have info that will help us solve this mystery, please send us the explanation via Info@downingtowntareahistoricalociety.org.

2. And we mis-identified the art teacher, who helped students create a mosaic mural at Uwchlan Hills School in last week's Hist-O-Gram, as Connie Jones. We've been informed that the art teacher's correct name was Connie Hall and, following her wedding, she was known as Connie Hall-Sparr. We can blame that miscue on the original source, the *East Branch Citizen*, a rag that was notorious for those kind of mistakes.

It's at 331 Norwood Road in East Caln



Kim Collins is a truly perceptive scholar because she was the first person to correctly identify the location of the site in the photo (taken by Mike Dunn) above as 331 Norwood Road in East Caln Township. The original part of the house was built circa 1750.

Scenes of fire at Wallace Avenue strip mall

You can see scenes of the devastating fire at the North Park strip mall on Wallace Avenue on Tuesday evening, May 12 via: <http://6abc.com/news/fire-breaks-out-at-downingtown-strip-mall/717565/>

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.downingtowndareahistoricalociety.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.downingtowndareahistoricalociety.org/Histograms.html.

Free ads for Non-Profits

Flower sale

The Men's Flower Sale at Marshallton United Methodist Church's will continue through Saturday, May 23. The church is located at 1282 W. Strasburg Road, Marshallton. Hours are 9 AM to 5 PM, Monday through Saturday. The sale will feature large hanging baskets, annuals, geraniums, climbing mandevilles, perennials, vegetables, herbs, patio planters and more. Proceeds will help support local, regional, and global outreach. For more information, contact the church office at (610) 696-5247.

Tour David Culp's Garden

You can visit the home of David Culp at 3:30 PM on Sunday, May 17, for a tour of his 2-acre garden where he designed the technique of layering. This free lecture-program is sponsored by the East Brandywine Township Historical Commission, and is available to the public. Culp is the author of *The Layered Garden: Design Lessons for Year-Round Beauty from Brandywine Cottage*. His articles have appeared in *Martha Stewart Living*, *Country Living*, *Fine Gardening*, *Green Scene*, and many other publications. His 1790's farmhouse is at 1158 Osborne Rd., Downingtown (off Rt. 322). No rsvp's are required. For more information, send queries to: CarolSinex@gmail.com.

Relay for Life

The American Cancer Society's annual Relay For Life will be held at DHS West, 445 Manor Ave., Downingtown, on Saturday, May 16, beginning at 10 AM. For more info on the event, see:

http://main.acsevents.org/site/TR?sid=128433&type=fr_informational&pg=informational&fr_id=66303.

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 Johnsontown Park and back; 11 AM, music at the gazebo in Kerr Park. For more info, access: www.downingtown.org/images/BikettheBrandywine%202015.jpg

History of John Rock Inc.

Bill MacCauley will present a program on John Rock Inc., America's premiere pallet manufacturer, when the West Caln Historical Society meets at 7 PM on Tuesday, May 19 meets in the Township building, 721 W. Kings Highway, Wagontown. In addition to being owner of John Rock Inc., Bill is a member of the Chester-Delaware County Farm Bureau, and a unique auctioneer at 4-H Fund raisers. The meetings are free and open to the public.

Strikeouts for Katie

Coed charity softball tournament on Saturday, May 23 and Sunday, May 24, in memory of Katie Castaldi, at the Downingtown Little League Fields, 318 Manor Ave. Proceeds go to: Katie's Kurls Cosmetology scholarship fund;

Dove Wings for Children; Manna on Main Street; DHS West Softball; Downingtown Little League. For more info: Strikeoutforkatie.com.

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.