



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 will be recognized as a truly perceptive scholar. Please send your response to: Info@downingtownareahistoricalsociety.org.

Oil discovery here was one of the big stories in the *Downingtown Archive* 96 years ago

Here are some of the news items local residents read about in the *Downingtown Archive* in the summer of 1919:

- Oil was discovered in **Lyndell** by John Lewis, proprietor of the general store there. Skeptics in the neighborhood pointed out that there was an oil tank, with a capacity of about 100 gallons, in the cellar of Lewis's store, which was about 25 feet behind where the oil had been

discovered. Lewis insisted that the tank wasn't leaking. Despite those suspicions, nearby property owners were leasing their land, and many drilling rigs were brought into the area. Those who took a sample of the discovered oil said it had a "distinct kerosene odor" and "burns about as readily as artificially refined kerosene." Also, an "analysis discloses the presence of some lubrication oils, as well as kerosene." Experts, including an engineer from the U.S. Bureau of Mines, examined the oil and the discovery site, but their reports had not yet been made public.

- Members of the **Minquas Fire Co.** voted to buy a new, electric siren, to replace the present fire alarm system. They also voted to change their regular meeting night to the second Tuesday night of the month, from the second Monday, "to accommodate Mr. Lear, who desired to hold his weekly dances on Monday nights."

- The **Downingtown School District's** enrollment at the end of the 1918-19 school year was 795 pupils, 166 of whom were in the high school. There were 29 students received diplomas that year. About 80 of the pupils lived outside the borough, and their tuition was paid for by the township in which they lived. The district's faculty included eight high school teachers and 17 grade school teachers.

- A **Friends School** was being built next to the meeting house on East Lancaster Avenue. The stone building, which will have a 32-student capacity, was built by George Fisher

- The annual **Fourth of July** celebration started with a morning parade, which formed at Bradford Avenue and Church Street in Johnstontown and continued over the borough's streets. In the line of march were many of the local boys who served in the military during World War I, two bands, plus Civil War vets who were members of Downingtown's Hancock GAR Post. At 11 AM, the World War I vets played a baseball game against other locals on the field behind the Central School building on West Lancaster Avenue. And at noon, the returning soldiers were served a lunch on the lawn of the First Baptist Church. Each of them received a special medal, suspended on a green and white ribbon, as a recognition of the town's admiration and esteem for their sacrifices and service. Another event on the Fourth of July was the Brandywine Driving Association's series of five horse races, held at the race track at the intersection of Brandywine Avenue and Boot Road. The winners' purses totalled \$1,000.

- Italian residents Downingtown, who formed **St. Anthony's Lodge** in 1919, celebrated St. Anthony's Day on June 13, with a Mass at St. Joseph's Church and a parade led by a 24-piece band. The celebration ended in the evening with fireworks set off behind McGraw's coal yard.

- **Downingtown Paper Box Co.** was offering "girls" \$1.50 a day while learning to become press feeders. Following their training, flat bed press feeders were paid \$2.25 a day, while cylinder press feeders got \$3 a day.

- Circulation at the **Downingtown Library** increased from 13,424 in 1918 to 14,376 in 1919, according to the annual report of librarian Hattie Zittle. The number of books in the library's collection totaled 4,838, and 259 of them had been added in the past 12 months.

What local residents were talking about 52 years ago

Noted below are news items published in local papers in early May 1963:

- With significantly increased enrollment due to new housing being built in the school district, the **Downingtown Elementary School Board** authorized the "post haste" construction of a 12-classroom addition to Lionville Elementary School, and the purchase of a 20-acre site in West Bradford, where an elementary school would be built.

But all that booming growth made it difficult for the 36-member **Joint High School Board** to decide which secondary school construction project should come first—a new junior high or an addition to the senior high school. Based on the recommendation of a study by a University of Pennsylvania survey team, the board had applied to the State Department of Public Instruction to build an addition to the DHS structure. However, representatives from Harrisburg were pushing for the new junior high.

- DHS students who received awards at the high school's **sports banquet** included: from the Downingtown Optimist Club—Eugene Williams, most valuable boy basketball player; Dianne Thompson, most valuable girl basketball player; from St. Anthony's Lodge—Bill Pollock, lineman of the year; and James Price, back of the year. Thompson also was named the outstanding girl athlete, and Edgar Donnnon received the outstanding boy athlete award. Harry Stuhldreher, one of Notre Dame's legendary Four Horsemen, was the featured speaker.

- The **Ladies of St. Joseph's Church**, Downingtown, elected these officers: Mrs. Charles Snyder, president; Mrs. Norman Sendler, vice president; Mrs. William Sheridan, recording secretary; Mrs. Irma Templin, corresponding secretary; and Josephine Valentino, treasurer.

- The following leaders were elected at **Hopewell Methodist Church**, in East Brandywine: Howard Laird, chairman, board of stewards; Charles Davis, church school superintendent; Ralph Whitely treasurer; George Yost, treasurer; Mrs. George Krapf, commission on membership and evangelism; Arthur Kring, commission on education; Edward Plank, commission on stewardship and finance; and John Bonham, commission on social concerns.

- Elected as officers of the **Downingtown branch of the Junior Auxiliary** of the Chester County Hospital were Mrs. Francis Fennelly, president; Mrs. Thomas Jenkins, vice president; Mrs. Nello Caporale, recording secretary; Mrs. Clair Langham, corresponding secretary; and Mrs. Glenn Echhoff, treasurer.

- **Lionville Brownies** who toured Hopewell Village were Leona Finkbiner, Sally Wallace, Christine and Janie Goodwin, Lynn Hayhurst, Susie Finch, Susie Pagett and Nancy Ruth Hoffman.

- Soloists Rick Carter and Steve Fetters, trombone; Carl Shrader, trumpet; Gary Cornog and Linda Ink, saxophone; plus the flute duet of Jean Reeves and Dixie Bradbury; performed in the spring band concert at **Brandywine-Wallace School**.

- Caln supervisors said the old **Ross Paper Co. mill** on Bondsville Road was infested with rats and should be cleaned up. The mill had been abandoned five years earlier, following a "devastating" fire.

- Elected as officers of the **Future Nurses Club** at DHS were Anne Woodruff, president; Sandra DeMatteo, vice president; Jane Rigg, secretary; Verna Stevenson, treasurer; and Linda Davis, historian.

- Vocal soloists at the junior high's **spring concert** were Susan Myers and Eugene Martin. Band members who played solos were David Robbins, David Cory, Phil Barlow and David Seel.

It's at 541 Old Horseshoe Pike in E. Brandywine



Kate Hallman 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 541 Old Horseshoe Pike in East Brandywine Township. Kate recognized the property's location because it had been owned by her former colleague in the DHS West English Department, Nancy Robinson. Nancy her husband, Russell, restored the property's buildings over the 28 years they lived there, until she retired recently. Nancy says the farmhouse probably was built ca. 1800. And the cottage, which had been a cooperage and a blacksmith's shop, was built in 1782 by Samuel MacFarland. It also may have served as a toll house on the Downingtown-Ephrata-Harrisburg Turnpike. The cottage "was near collapse" in 1985, when the Robinsons bought the property. "When we restored it, we walled in the original blacksmith bellows, but did not destroy it. Apparently, as many as 11 people lived in that 893-square-foot structure back in the 1780s," said Nancy.

Our Wish List

We're adding a section to our Hist-O-Gram—the Wish List. It will note artifacts and printed materials we especially need for our Archival collection, and items the Historical Society needs to reach its 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:

1. A copy of the DHS yearbook for the 1965-1970.
2. A digital camera which we'll use to photograph donated artifacts. That means we'll need pictures that include tiniest of 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 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.

Absolutely final correction

Here's the absolutely final correction about the art teacher, who helped students create a mosaic mural at Uwchlan Hills School in 1979. In several recent Hist-O-Grams, we incorrectly identified her as Connie Hall. Her correct name was Connie **Jones** and, following her wedding, she was known as Connie **Jones-Sparr**. We apologize for the error.

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.downingtowntareahistoricalociety.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.downingtowntareahistoricalociety.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, Rahn Brackin and Donna Capriotti.

Free ads for Non-Profits

Memorial Day Service

A Memorial Day service will be held at Marinelli Park on Chestnut Street in Downingtown at noon on Sunday, May 24.

Memorial Day Parade

Downingtown's Memorial Day Parade begins at 10 AM on Monday, May 25 at Beaver Creek Elementary School on West Pennsylvania Avenue and continues east on Pennsylvania Avenue to the Veterans Memorial at Kerr Park. For more information, contact Col. Paul Dougherty at 610-212-6607 or email colpauldougherty@gmail.com.

Memorial Day Parade

There will be a Memorial Day Parade in the village of Marshallton at 1:30 PM on Sunday, May 24.

Fine Arts Festival

The Downingtown Fine Arts Festival will be held in the 100 block of East Lancaster Avenue on from 10 AM to 6 PM on Saturday, May 30 and from 10 AM to 5 PM on Sunday May 31. The two-day festival will be put on by the

David Oleski Events and the Downingtown Main Street Assn., in partnership with the Victory Brewing Co. and the Borough of Downingtown. See www.downingtownfinearts.com/ for more details.

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.

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.