



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.

More news about the home front during WW II

Noted below are news items retrieved from *The Archive* during the fall of 1942.

- A two-part dedication of Downingtown's **World War II Honor Roll** that listed the 327 Downingtown boys who were serving in the military, as of December 1942. The dedication started with a program at the Roosevelt Theatre, which included music by the high school band and a quartet of DHS singers, comprised of John Wray, William Barrett, Gerald Kline and

Robert Laird. The second part involved the unveiling of the Honor Roll at Borough Hall by Edwin Wagner, president of the Rotary Club and Elmer Schrupf, president of the Lions Club. Members of the two clubs had been responsible for constructing the Honor Roll and compilation of the names placed on it. The costs of building the Honor Roll were borne by the Borough government.

- Downingtown housewives and high school girls started conducting a second **scrap drive** in the borough by going to 1,166 homes in the borough to promote the effort in late September 1942. The borough was divided into 11 districts, and each district had a captain. Subsequently, borough trucks picked up the piles of scrap metal, rags and rubber items placed by Downingtown citizens on the curbs in front of their residences. Also, housewives were urged to take waste fats and oils from their kitchens to their butcher; the federal government paid five cents for each pound of the kitchen waste they turned in. The federal War Production Board's goal for Downingtown was 230 tons of scrap. Sixty tons had been collected in the initial household drive, plus the 38 tons retrieved when the trolley tracks on Lancaster Avenue were torn out. And 58 tons of scrap were collected in one month by the **Salvage Committee in East Brandywine**. That total was 25 percent over the township's quota. Items contributed included an old treadmill once used for grinding corn, a water wheel with copper buckets, metal clocks, obsolete farm equipment, and a child's tricycle.

Also, more than three tons of metal were added to Downingtown's scrap pile after about 500 local children each "paid" their admission fee to the theatre by bringing at least five pounds of scrap in September 1942, so they could see a special show--a western feature and several reels of cartoons--**at the Roosevelt Theatre** on Brandywine Avenue in the borough.

- Six coal cars, several box cars and an oil tank unit, which were part of a 125-car-long **Pennsylvania Railroad train, buckled and tore up all four tracks** while passing through Downingtown, about 200 yards west of Brandywine Avenue in November 1942. The derailed oil tank car burst into flames. Both borough fire companies were on the scene in record time, but the firefighters couldn't get close to the fire for about an hour because the heat from burning oil was so intense it melted the electric power lines. There was fear that the fire might spread to the nearby lumber yard of W.P. Canby and the rear of the Bicking Paper Company's No. 1 Mill. All trains on the Pennsylvania Railroad's Main Line tracks were switched over to the low grade line between Thorndale and Glen Loch for several hours. Assistance was provided by the Coatesville Fire Department and a Steelton fire company that was experienced in fighting oil fires. The local firefighters were in action for 12 hours, in a heavy rainfall most of that time.

- With all of its military contract work, the **Downingtown Manufacturing Co.** was operating on three shifts, and 350 people were on the payroll. And about 30 of those employees were female machine tenders, who had been hired to relieve the acute labor shortage caused by so many men serving in the military. And the **Downingtown Iron Works** was running "Men Wanted for War Work" ads. The ads noted: "Experience not necessary for some jobs," and "Men now engaged in war work cannot be considered."

- Although the **DHS football team** had lost every game so far that season, the Whippet gridders closed their 1942 campaign with a 13-0 upset win over Pottstown. Johnny DiBernardi scored both of Downingtown's TDs.

- According to the November 1942 Parish Bulletin of **St. Joseph's Catholic Church** in Downingtown, 106 members of the parish were serving in the military. The number serving in each of the various branches were: Army, 62; Navy, 31; Marines, 7; and Air Corps, 6.

Now is the time to get your tickets for the Paranormal Investigators' presentation on Oct. 24 and Oct. 25

The Chester County Paranormal Investigators will make presentations on their latest findings, after recently spending several nights at Ashbridge House, our 306-year-old headquarters. The Investigators' presentations at Ashbridge House will be at 7 PM on Saturday, October 24 and at 2 PM on Sunday, October 25. Since each seating is limited to 35 people, you are urged to buy a ticket ASAP for either of the presentations.

Tickets can be purchased in advance for \$10 by sending a check to: the Downingtown Area Historical Society, P.O. Box 9, Downingtown, PA 19335, or paying for tickets on a Sunday afternoon (1-4 PM) when you visit Ashbridge House, (next to the Chick-Fil-A restaurant in the Ashbridge Square Shopping Center Square Shopping Center on Route 30 in East Caln, or by making an online payment via Paypal.

Although it is likely that both presentations will be sellouts, if any tickets are still available at the time of either presentation, they will be sold at the door at a cost of \$12. Light refreshments will be available after the presentations.

Please help the Historical Society by supporting our Restaurant Raffle

The Historical Society's third annual "A Taste of Chester County" restaurant raffle is bigger and better than ever, because those who buy a ticket will have an opportunity to win \$1,400 worth of dinners at seven great, local restaurants.

Proceeds from the raffle will enable the Historical Society to continue its efforts to repair the stone walls of Ashbridge House, our 306-year-old headquarters on Route 30 in the Ashbridge Square Shopping Center in East Caln Township. That means your continued support will enable us to continue re-pointing the house's leaking, exterior walls.

Those who generously supported last year's raffle allowed us to replace the crumbling mortar that bonded the stonework on the east side walls of the house, plus the exterior of the summer kitchen, which was built in the mid-19th Century.

The raffle winner will receive seven \$200 vouchers, with a total value of \$1,400, for meals at these seven area restaurants: Amani's BYOB, St. Anthony's Restaurant, The General Warren Inn, The Kimberton Inn, The Orangery, The Bordley House Grille and The Downingtown Country Club. Vouchers are good for one seating at each restaurant. Exclusions may apply.

Raffle tickets are \$50 each. They can be purchased at Ashbridge House, which is next to the Chick-Fil-A Restaurant, from 1-4 PM on Sundays. You also can order them by calling the Historical Society, 610-269-1709; Francine Dague, 610-306-2904; or by sending an email to: Info@downingtowntareahistoricalociety.org. The winning ticket will be drawn at 3 PM on Sunday, November 15. You don't have to be at the drawing to win. For more info on the raffle, including a disclaimer, go to: www.downingtowntareahistoricalociety.org.

What local residents were talking about 93 years ago

Noted below are news items retrieved from the *Downingtown Archive* in the latter part of 1922.

- The cornerstone for the **new East Ward School** was laid in early September 1922. The items placed inside the cornerstone by John Patton, president of the school board, included a Bible and a copy of the Downingtown Archive. (*Editor's Note: Anyone know what happened to that cornerstone?*)
- **Downingtown Woolen Mills**, which had bought a factory building and 17 acres in the borough, after it moved from Philadelphia several years earlier, announced that it planned to double its capacity here.
- A chemical truck, which costed \$3,000, and an ambulance, which was almost completely built for \$1,500 by members of the fire company, were housed at the **Minquas Fire Co.**
- Enrollment at the high school had reached 182 pupils. Organizations established at DHS for the first time were **an orchestra, a glee club and a Student Council**. Officers of the DHS Student Council were Lewis Laird, president; Marian Tweed, vice president; and Anne Downing, secretary.
- The **DHS football team** ended its 1922 season by clobbering Parkesburg 68-0, and it beat Spring City's first-ever squad 58-0. But Downingtown's overall record was 5-5.
- Local residents had an opportunity to see a 30-person cast, direct from New York, present "Uncle Tom's Cabin" at the **Downingtown Opera House**.

Brief, but important

- Remember when the **Young Whippets** football program got underway in Downingtown the fall of 1964? A member recently brought us a copy of the program's first annual banquet, which was held on January 30, 1965. Featured speakers were Ray DiSerafino, DHS athletic director; and Chic Chiccino, head coach of the Junior High football team. Officers of the organization were Roger Patrizio, chairman; Frank Allen, general manager; Charles Dumont, secretary; and Raymond Schollenberger, treasurer. Other members of the board were Charles Menas, Pete Hayes, James Hamilton, Tom Woodward, Herb Lee, Robert Miller, Owen Story, William Bricker and Ramsey Hipple. Head coaches of the teams were Ramsey Hipple, 75-pounders; Tom Woodward, 100-pounders; and Herb Lee, 110-pounders.

- Don Greenleaf, retired Downingtown borough manager, says that when he read about the 1979 dedication of the **Struble Hiking and Biking Trail** in last week's Hist-O-Gram, that event brought back some poignant memories. Don says the engineers who were designing a piping system to transport wastewater along the East Branch of Brandywine Creek—from the facilities at Marsh Creek State Park in Upper Uwchlan Township to the regional sewage treatment plant in Downingtown—originally planned to have the piping system criss-cross the Brandywine at six points in order to maintain downward gravity. "Those crossings would be hard to maintain and costly to build," explains Don. So, he suggested that the piping systems be built on the old railroad right-of-way of the New Holland branch of the Penn Central Railroad Line, which had been abandoned in 1972. By installing the piping under old railbed, the gravity flow of the wastewater could be maintained, and the construction costs were much cheaper. Don also mentioned that the railbed also could be used as a hiking trail in the future. Armand Taraschi, president of Downingtown's Borough Council proposed the railbed idea to the County Commissioners, and the "rest is history," concludes Don.

It's Whitford Lodge on Route 30 in Exton



Although many Hist-O-Gram readers often drive past the building in the photo, not one of them guessed its identity. It's the former Whitford Lodge on Route 30, near Route 100 in Exton. The 1782 building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1984. The site has served as a bank branch in recent years. In the early 20th Century, it was a summer vacation home for working girls; \$3 for a one-week stay in 1913. During World War I, volunteers in the Women's Land Army, who worked on local farms, stayed there. And it was a tea room in the 1920s, operated by the Chester Valley Nurse Association. It also was the site of the first Chester County Library, in the 1930s.

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.

This edition's Vintage Ad:

ATTENTION
Downingtown
WOMEN

Free Transportation
To Work

PLN 11-29-46

We need women to work in food processing plant. Make up to 65c per hour. Time and half time over 40 hours. Double time for Sunday. Vacation with pay.

~~SMOCKS LOANED~~ **FREE**
~~TO YOU~~

Free coffee in our modern, comfortable lounge. Free accident and sickness insurance.

Where else can you find such ideal working conditions?

Apply NOW in Person to
GROCERY STORE
PRODUCTS CO.
Union and Adams Sts.
Phone West Chester 1880

This ad was published in the Nov. 29, 1946 edition of the *Daily Local News*.

Our Wish List

The items listed below in our Wish List notes the materials with a Downingtown connection, the Historical Society especially needs to reach its archival goals.

- A copy of Barbara Carlson Travaglini's History of St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Downingtown.
- All DHS yearbooks published since 1964. And any yearbooks or newspapers published by Downingtown and Lionville Junior High Schools.
- Any printed materials related to: the Downingtown Young Whippets, Downingtown Little League, Downingtown Babe Ruth League or the Downingtown American Legion Baseball teams, and the Downingtown Girls' Softball League. Also, any printed materials related to the Lionville Youth Association, West Bradford Youth Association, or the East Brandywine Youth Athletics.

If you need more info about any 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

Art Film/Discussions

Art Professor Donna Usher will present a series of four Art Film/Discussions at the new Downingtown Library on Wallace Avenue, from 5:45-8 PM. The next session, on Wednesday, October 28, will be about "Maya Lin, A Strong, Clear Vision," a story about the Viet Nam Veterans Memorial created by a female, Asian, Yale architecture student. It also includes information on public statues created by Maya Lin. All the programs will be presented in the library's media room. For more details, contact Karen Smith at 610-269-2741 or e-mail Professor Usher at dusher@wcupa.edu.

Fall Book Sale

The annual Fall Book Sale, sponsored by the Friends of the Downingtown Library, will be held at the library from 5-7:30 PM on Friday, Oct. 16 and 9 AM to 4:30 PM on Saturday, Oct. 17. Donations of books in good condition are currently being collected and can be dropped off inside the library.

Roast Beef Dinner

Marshallton United Methodist Church, 1282 West Strasburg Road, as part of West Bradford Township's Fall Family Festival, will have its Roast Beef Dinner from 4:30-6:30 PM on Saturday, October 17. Open to all, the family-style dinner includes roast beef, mashed potatoes, mushroom & beef gravy, green beans, cole slaw, applesauce, rolls,

dessert, and beverage. Tickets are \$12 for adults and \$5 for children aged 5 to 12. Meals are is eat-in or take-out. For more info, call the church office at [\(610\) 696-5247](tel:6106965247).

High School Homecoming

DHS West's Homecoming events begin on Thursday, October 15 with a parade, starting at Beaver Creek School on West Pennsylvania Avenue at 7 PM, and ending at the high school on Manor Avenue. DHS West's Homecoming Queen will be crowned at the DHS West vs. West Chester East football game on Friday night, October 16. The STEM Academy's Homecoming will be held on November 12. DHS alumni, as well as local residents, are encouraged to attend these events.

The Age of Aquarius

Ellen Endslow, Director of Collections/Curator at the Chester County Historical Society will present an eclectic trip down memory lane, back to the 1960s, at 3:30 PM on Sunday, Oct. 18 at the East Brandywine Township building on Route 322. Ellen will tell how Chester County fit into the national timeline on topics such as civil rights, pop culture, and Viet Nam. The program is free and no RSVP is required. For more info, contact: CarolSinex@gmail.com.

Spaghetti Dinner

You can get a spaghetti dinner at the Downingtown Area Senior Center, 983 E. Lancaster Ave., from 3-6 PM on Thursday, Oct. 18. Tickets are \$10; children's portions, 10 and under, \$6. Call 610-269-3900 for take-out orders.

Program on Medicare

You can learn about the ins and outs of Medicare and how to maximize your coverage at this program, to be held from 6:30-7:30 PM on Monday, Oct. 19 at the Downingtown Library. Register online via www.downingtownlibrary.org.

Art of German Hexing

Deb Estep, historian, author, educator and Civil War re-enactor, will speak on the history of the Art of German hexing at 7 PM Tuesday, October 20, at the West Caln Historical Society meeting in the township building, 721 Kings Highway, Wagontown. All are welcome to the free programs.

Halloween Parade

Downingtown's Halloween Parade will be held at 3 PM Saturday, October 31. The parade route will be along Pennsylvania Avenue between Beaver Creek Elementary School at 601 W. Pennsylvania Ave., heading east to the Kerr Park Gazebo. Participants in the parade must be at the staging area by 2:30 PM. Costumed participants will stage at Beaver Creek Elementary School and floats will stage at Grace Church at the corner of Lloyd and Pennsylvania Avenues. All participants will need a number in order to be judged. For more details, see: <http://downingtown.org/Documents/Temporary%20Documents/DTOWN%20HALLOWEEN%202015.pdf>.

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. 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.

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 reasonable. Call 610-269-3555 for more information.