



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.

What area residents were talking about 67 years ago

Noted below are news items originally published in local newspapers in late March 1948.

- Although the consolidation of school districts in Pennsylvania wouldn't be resolved until the 1960s, the winds of change had begun to blow through Chester County in 1948. That's when **West Bradford** residents learned that the Chester County School Board was going to set up a tentative reorganization of school districts, and rural school districts, such as West Bradford's, would lose their independence. That's why about 100 township residents met in the Marshallton

Elementary school, where they learned that the county board's proposal included a plan for township pupils in the seventh through twelfth grades would attend Downingtown Junior-Senior High School. Although many—but not all—West Bradford pupils had been attending the junior-senior high school in Downingtown for decades, many other West Bradford residents wanted to have the option of sending their kids to the junior and senior high schools in West Chester or Coatesville. In a subsequent meeting, the township decided to retain a research group from the University of Pennsylvania to study the options under consideration.

- Lambert McGuckin, chairman of the Downingtown American Legion Post, announced that the number of **new homes built for veterans** and their families in the west end of Downingtown were increased from 25 to 49. And three of the houses were assigned to non-veterans. McGuckin also said the Cape Cod-style houses would be built on land formerly owned by G.O. Carlson and Wilmer C. Johnson. The building lots were located on William and Mary Streets and Ashton Avenue.

- New officers of the Ladies Auxiliary of the **Brandywine VFW Post** were Ruth King, president; Louise Ayers, senior vice president; Jane Fennelly, junior vice president; Mrs. Richard Forbes, treasurer; Mrs. Leland MacIntire, chaplain; Katherine Ceulers, conductress; Mrs. George Hilton, guard; and Mrs. James Echols and Mrs. Ronald West, trustees.

- Sixth grade pupils at Downingtown's **West Ward School** who participated in an operetta included Dick Goudie, Chaddie Campbell, Dottie Kipp, June **liver**, Helen Jane Henry, Elmer Esworthy, Ray Thompson, Billie Osborne, Esther Flowers, Theresa Ciarlone, Richard Valentino, Fay Bousum, Shirley Cumens, Bob Plank and Nancy Yohn.

- Members of **Girl Scout Troop 10, Marshallton**, who helped the troop celebrate its 10th anniversary, were Verna and Jo-Ann Woodward, Bunny Bunting, Patty Bittle, Caroline Ferri, June Ellingsworth, Didi Wilson, Edith Albertson, Mary Brackbill, Jeannie Thompson, Carlene Yetter, Shirley Lamborn, Mary Jane Place, Jo Ann LeFevre, Doris Cann, Lee Ashby and Edith Smyers.

- DHS students who had major roles in the **senior class play** included Marie Cozzone, Ruth Schrupf, Philip Burns, Duane Chesney, Charles Pollock, Marjorie Lyons, Virginia and Thomas Bare, Frances DiPietro, Richard Warren, Rena Eachus, Frank Pomento, Betty Moore, Jane Wallace, Dorothy Perley, Frank Wagoner and A.C. Hammons. Music was offered between acts by these soloists: Elsie Manetta, violin; and Peter Edgar, trumpet.

Local news during the early years of World War II

- An all-night **air-raid blackout**, conducted in the borough in June 1942, was “most successful,” according to Downingtown Defense Council chairman Chandler Roberts. About 350 volunteers were involved in the air raid. The practice event included several staged medical casualties and fires. The town was divided into 10 air raid districts; each had a warden, auxiliary police and messengers, according to Ed Towson, chief air raid warden. Phone calls in and out of the Control Center at Borough Hall were handled by Ted Griffith and Leo Hamilton. The Council's medical corps, supervised by Dr. Thomas Parke, included 10 station wagons which brought practice casualty victims to the Alert Fire Co. The Red Cross canteen at the East Ward School, supervised by Mrs. Edwin Baldwin and Mrs. Wesley Worrall, served 500 sandwiches and 250 cups of coffee.

- Downingtown's salvage campaign began in August 1942, with the collection of 40 tons of metal and rubber items, as well as rags, brought from local homes. And Borough Council added a huge amount of metal to the salvage total when it voted to **remove the trolley tracks** from Lancaster Avenue, between Brandywine Avenue and the borough's western border. The trolley tracks were installed in 1906, but the service stopped in 1929 when the West Chester Railway Co. went bankrupt.
- The **Downingtown American Legion Post** was participating in a national campaign of collecting old phonograph records, which were to be given to military service personnel. The records were dropped off at Griffith's Hardware, Greenleaf's Pharmacy and Hutchison's Drug Store.

Why was the Grange National Bank torn down?



We know that the Grange National Bank, on East Lancaster Avenue in Downingtown, was chartered in 1907 and that it merged with Downingtown National Bank in 1932, during the Depression era. And we know that in later years the landmark building was the site of several businesses, including a liquor store, Cookie's Produce and a poolroom. So, why and when was this substantial building torn down?

What was happening in the Downingtown area 60 years ago

Noted below are news items retrieved from the October 13, 1955 edition of The Downingtown Archive:

- The equipment, buildings, property and machinery of **Downingtown Manufacturing Co.**, which had been producing internationally recognized heavy paper making equipment in the borough for nearly 75 years, were purchased by Beloit Eastern Corp., a Wisconsin firm. And Black-Clawson Co. of Hamilton, OH, bought the Downingtown firm's suction roll operations and paper making patents. Horace Rodgers, who had been the works manager for the local company, would continue as general manager of Beloit Eastern's Downingtown operation. In its early years, the Downingtown firm also manufactured steam engines, castings, creamery equipment, water wheels and power transmission equipment.

- **Downingtown Paper Box Co.** announced its plans to build a new plant and offices on Boot Road in East Caln Township. The box company's former property was taken over by the Downingtown Paper Co., to be used to expand its production capabilities. Construction of the 72,000-square-foot building was projected to cost \$600,000. Plans for an additional expansion of the paper box operation on Boot Road would increase the production space by 77,000 square feet. Gibson "Bud" McIlvaine, president of the paper box firm, also said \$300,000 would be spent on new equipment—a color rotogravure press and a cutter and creaser. The two machines would increase the company's production capacity by about 50 percent.

- The **DHS football team** scored almost at will, as Coach Howard Caskey's gridders won their first Ches-Mont League game, by beating Phoenixville 34-13. The offense was led by Johnny Chilla, who tossed TD passes to Jack Skiles, John Bousum and Harry Watson. Jimmy DiSante also scored.

- Officers of **Girl Scout Troop 165** in Downingtown were Jackie Thomas, president; Mary Ann Charles, vice president; Linda Aumiller, treasurer; Mary Ann Phillips, assistant treasurer. Leaders of the troop were Mrs. Earl Radcliffe, Mrs. Chester Charles and Mrs. Merwin Thomas.

- The Methodist Youth Fellowship's officers at **Glen Moore Methodist Church** were Margaret Miller, president; Jane Louise Davis, vice president; Clarence Miles, treasurer; and Charlotte Davis, secretary.

- Members of the newly organized **Brownie Troop 243** at Messiah Lutheran Church, Downingtown, were Deidre Collins, Lynne Dowlin, Jane Kaempher, Dolores MacIntire. Martha Menas, Deborah Morrison, Judy Olsen, Jean Perella, Ann Woodruff and Barbara Yohn. Leaders of the troop were Mrs. Nels Olsen, Mrs. Harlan Morrison and Mrs. George Dowlin.

- A marker in memory of Abigail Hartman Rice, a Revolutionary War nurse who was stricken with typhoid fever and hospitalized at **Yellow Springs Hospital**, was placed at her former home in West Pikeland by the Daughters of the American Revolution.

- Connie Osborne was crowned Harvest Queen at the annual **DHS Farm Show**, which would soon be replaced as a major social event at the high school by all the new homecoming activities.

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.

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It's the covered bridge in Lyndell, next to the general store



Russell Faller is a truly perceptive scholar because he was the first person to correctly identify the covered bridge over the Brandywine in Lyndell. The bridge, which connected East Brandywine and Upper Uwchlan Townships, was built in about 1875. After a Chester County engineer determined that the bridge was unfit for traffic, it was replaced by a steel girder bridge in 1932. Next to the bridge in the photo above is part of the Lyndell general store, which was established in 1835 and was long reputed to be the nation's oldest general store in continuous operation. Currently, the building is a residence. Sandy Lammey tells us that her mother, Ruth Lammey, was born on the second floor of the general store 90 years ago. Ruth's grandfather, John J. Lewis, owned the store from 1917- 1937. He purchased the entire stock of general store merchandise, plus the contents of the coal yard located at the Lyndell train station, for \$3,200.

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 C. 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 either of these requests, please send an email to:

Info@downingtowntareahistoricalociety.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.

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 will be on Wednesday, Sept. 30. It will focus on the film "The Rape of Europa." The documentary covers the theft, recovery and repatriation of Europe's art masterpieces during and after World War II. Future programs this fall include: Wednesday, October 14, "As Seen Through These Eyes" a film on how Holocaust victims created art to document and survive in Nazi camps; and on October 28, "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.

Fire Co. Open Houses

Fire Prevention open houses will be conducted from 6:30-9 PM on Wednesday, October 7 at the Alert Fire Co., 122 W. Pennsylvania Ave., Downingtown, and at the Minquas Fire Co., 141 Wallace Ave., Downingtown.

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 eat-in or take-out. For more info, call the church office at [\(610\) 696-5247](tel:6106965247).

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.

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.

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: Vdiluiji@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.