



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. 7, No. 37

September 22, 2016

Where and What Was This?



The first person to correctly identify the scene in the photo above will be recognized as a truly perceptive scholar. Please send your response to: Info@downingtownareahistoricalsociety.org.

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, and you'd like to receive a copy of our free Hist-O-Gram directly every week, you can do that by accessing our website: www.downingtownareahistoricalsociety.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.downingtownareahistoricalsociety.org/Histograms.html.

What locals were talking about 68 years ago

Noted below are news items originally published in the August 26, 1948 edition of *The Archive*:

- The Downingtown School District's elementary school teachers that school year were: **West Ward School**—Marjorie Thorne, kindergarten; Helen Walk, first grade; Marjorie Webb, first and second grades; Lillian Noll, second grade; Emily Lewis, third grade; Irma Miller, third and fourth grades; Jean Priest, fourth grade; Madeline Laird, fifth grade; Ralph Emery, fifth grade; Florence Moore, sixth grade; Theresa Jones, first through fifth grades in the segregated (African-American students) Union classroom; Dorothy York, special class..

- **East Ward School**— Marjorie Thorne, kindergarten; Mary Warren, first grade; Margaret Rimel, first and second grade; Sara Way, second grade; Elizabeth Ezra, third grade; Sara Powell, fourth grade; Lillian Schoenberger, fifth grade; Rhoda Yost, sixth grade; Mary Thompson, first through fifth grades in the segregated (African-American students) Union classroom.

- Downingtown's **Nice Yarn Corp.** purchased the North Star Woolen Mill of Wakefield, RI. Charles Nice, president of the local yarn plant, said he had wanted to expand his operation here, but the cost of building additional production space in Downingtown was too expensive, and the borough's water supply was inadequate. Nice also said that yarn produced in Downingtown would be dyed at the Rhode Island facility, instead of contracting Philadelphia dye houses to handle that process.

- When an all-star game was played by Chester County Baseball League players, it was the first game to be played under the newly-installed lights at Kerr Park, Downingtown. About 3,000 fans attended the game.

- Lady Baden-Powell, who established the Girl Guides in England and was the widow of the founder of the Boy Scout movement in Great Britain, was a guest of honor at **Camp Indian Run in Glenmoore**. It was from Lady Baden-Powell that Juliette Low, an American, learned about the Girl Guides and brought that concept to the United States, and established the Girl Scout movement in the United States in 1912.

- Dave Ginsberg said his new aluminum truck-trailer plant, **Gindy Manufacturing Co.**, on Boot Road in East Caln would soon open.

- A 1948 Chevrolet sedan was the grand prize awarded on the last night of the Thorndale Fire Co. fair, held behind the Thorndale School on Route 30. Other prizes given that night were a 7-cubic-foot refrigerator, a Filter Queen vacuum cleaner, and a Shetland pony. Entertainment on Saturday night was provided by Warren Mercer's Royal Ramblers.

- Local stores, whose ads focused on kids' back-to-school items, included: Cinderella dresses, ranging in price from \$2.95 to \$4.95, at the **Downingtown Department Store**; pencils, 29 cents for a dozen, and pencil cases for 59 cents at the **J.J. Newberry Five and Dime Store**; Zenith and GE portable radios in "nifty leather cases, just the ticket for back to college," at the **Romig Electronic Service Co.** And at **Di Luigi's Shoe Store**, Little Yankee shoes cost \$5.50 a pair, for up to size 12 and \$5.95 per pair for larger sizes.

- If they passed Dr. Herman Kramm's physical exam, members of the **DHS football squad** went through a week of preseason training at Camp Collie near Quakertown. Howard Caskey, a former Penn State player, was a new assistant coach on head coach Don White's staff.

It's a scene from "The Blob"



Bob Stevens is a truly perceptive scholar because he was the first person to correctly identify the scene in the photo above as part of the sci-fi classic, "The Blob," which was partially filmed in Downingtown in 1957. Many of the film's interior scenes were shot in Good News Productions' buildings now occupied by the Historic Yellow Springs Foundation in West Pikeland. The essence of the film was that 26-year-old Steve McQueen, in his first starring movie role, and his girlfriend in the movie were trying to warn people in their hometown about a monster, composed of a viscous silicone substance, enhanced with red gasoline dye so it would show better in the Technicolor movie.

Scenes in the movie also were at Phoenixville's Colonial Theatre, at a Royersford supermarket and at the former Spring City High School. The climactic scene was shot at the Downingtown Diner, at Downing and West Lancaster Avenues in the borough. That's when the monster attacked the diner while most of the lead characters were trapped inside. The teenagers reached safety when the monster was sprayed with carbon dioxide.

The only local person who had a speaking role was Rev Thomas Ogden, pastor of Downingtown Methodist Church. Local firefighters who had non-speaking parts in the scene at Royersford supermarket were: Bob Pollock, Elmer Schrupf, Al Peterman, Richard Keers, Harry Flinn, Gerry Williams, Bill Dawson, Paul Backenstose and George Dowlin. Sonny Sciarretta drove the Alert Fire Co.'s Seagraves fire truck in that scene. Locals who were in the crowd outside the diner, with their hotrods, were Richard Cabott, John Walker (later DHS basketball coach) and Lou Rambo.

What was happening here 67 years ago

Noted below are news items originally published in local papers in the latter part of February 1949:

- The **Downingtown Fire Department** was considering the purchase of a two-way radio system, which would have a base unit at the Alert Fire Co. and portable units on each of the department's trucks. Appointed to work on the project were Benjamin Norris, Martin Binder, Thomas Hyde, Arthur Phillips and Benjamin Summers.
- The **Downingtown Chamber of Commerce** was making plans for the third annual Chester County Talent Pageant, to be held in the borough in June. Committee assignments for the pageant included these Chamber members: Everett Hoopes, director; Fred Howe, staging; Creston Shoemaker, program; Jack Brownstein and Jim Fennelly, general activities; Mrs. Penrose Davis, awards; Vinton Smedley and Earl Entekin, tickets; Charles Emery, judges; Herb Kreider, treasurer; and Mrs. Walter McClure, publicity.
- Although the **DHS boys' basketball team** lost 54-53 when it played West Chester High School in January, the Warriors crushed the Whippets 59-39 in a revenge match. Jack Helm was Downingtown's leading scoring, with 17 points, and Sonny Milano tallied 10.
- The borough's Zoning Board of Adjustment granted **Butch DiBernardi** a permit to build a larger grocery store at 311 Highland Avenue in Downingtown.
- The annual audit for **St. Anthony's Lodge**, Downingtown, showed that the club had donated \$6,339 to charitable causes in 1948, including \$1,000 to the DHS band uniform fund and \$1,500 to Chester County Hospital. And the lodge's Ladies Auxiliary put on a Gay Nineties Review which included these "can-can girls: Romaine Capriotti, Lucy and Delia Ippolito, Elsie DiStephano and Theresa Mascherino. The review was directed by Mrs. Mario Pizii; she was assisted by Mrs. Lewis Capriotti and Mrs. David D'Attilio.
- Entertainment provided at the **East Ward School Mothers' Club** meeting included accordion numbers played by Ruth Ann Wood, and piano selections by Judy Gregg, Helen Burkhart, Duer Smedley, Jean Bicking and Teddy Miller.
- About 100 guests attended a pork and sauerkraut dinner at the VFW Home. Members of the **VFW Auxiliary**, who prepared and served the dinner, included Mrs. Henry Thomas, Mary Warren, Doris and Rose Colella, Mrs. William Reed, Ruth King, Betty and Jane Fennelly, Mrs. James Echols, Louise Ayers, Mrs. Joseph Eby, Dorothy McCue and Mrs. Walter Hadfield.
- Elected as officers of the Luther League at **Messiah Lutheran Church**, Downingtown, were Albert Skiles, president; Joseph Streamer, vice president; and Ruth Romig, secretary-treasurer.
- Members of **Boy Scout Troop 52**, Marshallton, honored at a court of honor were Robert Bunting Jr, who earned the rank of Eagle; Albert King and Albert Miller, Tenderfoot. The troop's committee included John Miller, John Trimble, Edward Ellingsworth, Merrill Cann, Frank Kahler and Robert Ciaffoni.
- New officers of the **Downingtown branch of the American Red Cross** included Charles Sigle, chairman; Mrs. William Reed, vice chairman; Marie Francella, secretary; and William Mahood, treasurer.

Have you ever wondered about the History where you live?

“SLICES OF DOWNTOWN HISTORY”

*A 'Free to the Public' Multi-Part Program presented by
The DOWNTOWN Area Historical Society and the DOWNTOWN Library*

SLICE 1:
Friday, October 7
6:30PM
“MILLTOWN”

SLICE 2:
Thursday, Jan. 26
6:30PM
**“Iron Horse Comes to
Downtown”**

Location:
Downtown Library
122 Wallace Avenue
Downtown, PA 19335

Register your spot for
either or both sessions
today!

Call the Library
@ 610 269 2741, or,
Register Online:

www.downtownlibrary.org

- Why was it called “Milltown”?
- Who started Downtown?
- Who was here first and why?
- How does a Mill work?
- Does the area where I live have history?
- What is a “Mill Race”?

- How did people move around in the 19th Century?
- Who built the roads and railroads?
- What is the Pennsylvania Railroad?
- What did the road and railroad system look like?
- How did the road and railroad system contribute to the growth of Downtown?

Come “Grab a Slice” of History!

Group Photo of the Week



Members of the Downingtown Junior High School basketball team in the late 1930s were, left to right, According to a list of names on the back of the original photo, front row: ? Lyons, W. Horsey, ? Guy, V. Petrella, M. Pannetta, A. Ippolito, J. Mascherino, F. Francella, A. Farnum, M. Mascherino. In the back row is Coach Don White, flanked by managers D. Jameson and L. Sheeler.

Hope to see you on Sunday at the Fall Fest

The Historical Society will have a booth at the Downingtown-Thorndale Chamber of Commerce's Fall Fest, which will be held on East Pennsylvania Avenue and Green Street in the borough, from 11 AM to 4 PM on Sunday, September 25. In addition to selling ornamental replicas of historic buildings in Downingtown, two local writers, who are members of the Historical Society, will be signing their new books at our booth. They are Marion Piccolomini, who wrote "World War II and Chester County," and Jim Sundman who authored "Pennsylvania Main Line Railroad Stations, Philadelphia to Harrisburg."

Vintage Ad of the Week



Luncheons
\$1.50

FULL COURSE

Dinners
\$2.25 plus tax

Complete Facilities For

- **WEDDING RECEPTIONS**
- **BANQUETS**
- **BUSINESS MEETINGS**
- **CHRISTMAS PARTIES**

accommodating from 15 to 140 persons

featuring **Fresh Strawberry Pie!**

ZINN'S NEW MODERN DINER

INGLESIDE FARM, THORNDALE, PA.
Between Downingtown & Coatesville (Rt. 30)

This ad was originally published in the Daily Local news in September 6, 1964.

Officers of the Downingtown Area Historical Society are: Parry Desmond, president; Ernie Jameson, vice president; Marion Piccolomini, recording secretary; Francine Dague, treasurer; and Donna Capriotti, corresponding secretary. The board of directors includes: Harry Helms, Mike Dunn, Phil Dague and Dennis Walton. Carol Grigson is the archivist.

Free Ads for Non-Profits

Tour of National 9/11 Memorial Museum

Lukens Veterans Guild is sponsoring a trip to the National 9/11 Memorial Museum in New York City on November 2. An Elite bus coach leaves Coatesville at 11 AM. Trip, which costs \$95 a person, includes a timed museum ticket, dinner at Hometown Buffet Restaurant and driver gratuity. Reservation deadline is September 29. For more details and to make a reservation, call Sharon Tandich at 610-715-2993.

Fall Craft Festival & Chili Cook-off

There will be a Fall Craft Festival and Chili Cook-off, plus hand-crafted items galore and treasures from Granny's Attic, at Simpson Meadows, 101 Plaza drive, Downingtown, from 9 AM until 2 PM on Saturday, October 22.

Operation Military Christmas Care

Hibernia United Methodist Church will be sending much-needed care packages to servicemen and women overseas this holiday season. Operation Military Christmas Care Package runs from September 20 through October 17. Drop-off locations include the East Brandywine Township Building and Village Hardware. Downingtown drop-off locations are: Downingtown Borough Hall, Dad n Jac's This & That, and Dane Décor. For more details and a o view flyer a list of suggested items, click on:

www.downingtown.org/Documents/Operation%20Military%20Christmas%20flyer%202016.pdf<http://www.downingtown.org/Documents/Operation%20Military%20Christmas%20flyer%202016.pdf>, or call Jane Bracken at 610-733-1212.

Roast Beef Dinner

Marshallton United Methodist Church, 1282 West Strasburg Road, will host a Roast Beef Dinner on Saturday, October 15. The menu will also include mushroom & brown gravy, mashed potatoes, green beans, cole slaw, applesauce, rolls & butter, dessert and beverage. Hours for the "Eat-in" or "Take-out" option are from 4:30 to 6:30 PM. Cost is \$12/adult and \$5/child (5 to 12 years of age). Contact the church office at (610) 696-5247 or via office@marshalltonchurch.org with any questions.

Jim Croce

Carol Sinex Schmidt, member of the East Brandywine Historical Commission, will speak about the life and times of singer/songwriter Jim Croce, who lived in Chester County, at 7 PM Tuesday, October 18 when the West Caln Historical Society meets at the township building 721 W. Kings Highway, Wagontown. The meeting is free and open to the public.

Senior Expo & Octoberfest

The Downingtown Area Senior Center will have a Senior Expo, sponsored by State Rep. Harry Lewis, from 10 AM until 2 PM on Tuesday, October 11. It will include county, and state agencies, as well as local businesses and non-profits, which provide services to seniors. And from 6:30 to 11 PM. on Saturday, October 22, the Senior Center will have an Octoberfest, which will feature dinner and dancing. To purchase tickets (\$35 per person), call the Senior Center, 610-269-3939.

Clothing Drive

There will be a drive for fall/winter clothing at the Christian Faith Fellowship, 156 Wallace Ave., Downingtown. Drop-off dates are 5:30-7:30 PM on Thursday, Sept. 22; 10 AM-12 noon; and on Saturday, Sept. 24. For more info, check out: <http://downingtowntown.org/Documents/Temporary%20Documents/CFFClothingDriveSept2016.pdf>.

Blood Drive at St. Elizabeth's

A Red Cross blood drive, sponsored by the Knights of Columbus at St. Elizabeth Catholic Church, at Route 100 and Fellowship Road in Upper Uwchlan, will be held from 8 AM to 1 PM on Saturday, September 24. You can register via: www.redcrossblood.org. For more info, call Matthew Ward at 610-873-0275.

5K and Fun Run

The Downingtown Community Education Foundation will host a Super Hero 5K race and a 1-mile fun run on Saturday, September 24 in the Town Center at Eagleview. The fun run will be at 9 AM and the 5K will start at 9:15 AM. For more details, see: www.dcef.org or contact Jackie Fenn at jfenn@decf.org.

Library Love

Roberts Subaru will sponsor the Library Love fun night from 6-9 PM on Thursday, September 29 at the Downingtown Country Club. In addition to cocktails and hors d'oeuvres, there will be auctions and a raffle. Tickets are \$40. Proceeds go to the Downingtown Library. For more info, see: <http://downingtowntown.org/Documents/Temporary%20Documents/LibraryLove9-29-16.jpg>,

Class Reunion

DHS Class of 1966 will celebrate its 50th Class Reunion from 7-11 PM on Friday, September 23, at the Downingtown Country Club, 93 Country Club Drive, Downingtown, www.golfdowntowntown.com. For more info, refer to the class Facebook page: Downingtown HS Class of 1966, or call 610-745-0864.

Farmers Market

The Downingtown Farmers Market has returned to Kerr Parks. It will be open from 9 AM to 1 PM on Saturdays. For more info, see: <http://growingrootspartners.com/downingtowntown-farmers-market>.

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 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 <http://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: JPC Cheryl@verizon.net.