



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. 9, No. 1

January 4, 2018

Thank You Parry Desmond!

The year was 2010 and the president of the Downingtown Area Historical Society was Parry Desmond. Parry was a writer, an editor, and former publisher of the East Branch Citizen. He was also looking for a way to make the history of the Downingtown area exciting to its residents. He was well aware of the gems contained in the Society's archives, mostly unknown by the vast majority of people. He was looking for a vehicle to make history and nostalgia relevant, and a way to reach large numbers of people.

Parry began perusing the websites of any historical society that he could think of. He would find whatever they were using to keep in touch with their membership. After each discovery, we would debate the good and bad of each approach. This was also a time when most people used email; social media did not have the impact it has today.

Out of these discussions, the weekly Hist-O-Gram was born on October 15, 2010, a weekly, free news magazine, full of features and pictures. It has continued weekly until December 2017. Think of it! Weekly featured articles, references to what people were doing at the turn of the 20th century, 1940's, 1960's and 1970's. People began to look for names they knew and remembered the times that were referenced in that issue.

The first year of articles were what Parry referred to as "low hanging fruit." These were stories he knew from his newspaper days or from living in Downingtown. Pictures were often supplied from DAHS archives. Knowing a good bit about the story before the research began, he could get the rest by calling people he knew.



Parry Desmond

By the second and succeeding years, stories and material became a great deal more work. To find interesting tidbits, Parry would spend a minimum of 5 hours weekly, reading microfilm. (A side benefit of this effort was the printing out of these articles which then became part of our extensive clipping files.) He would then have to determine what was usable for story lines and where he could get photographs to go with it. During the same time, I was processing many items DAHS had received over the years. These two efforts began to merge, and artifacts suggested stories.

Downingtown Area Historical Society's Hist-O-Gram

Interesting Local History, Accessed From Our Archives

Vol. 1, No. 1

October 15, 2010

Downingtown Little League was founded in 1949

Several community leaders formed the Downingtown Little League on June 30, 1949. It was the first Little League in Chester County, and one of only six leagues in the Philadelphia District. The founding officers were: Dr. George Bousum, president; Francis Tweed, vice president; Charles Emery, secretary; Vinton Smedley, treasurer. Original sponsors of teams were Pepperidge Farm, St. Anthony's Lodge, Loyal Order of the Moose and the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Games were played on the vacant lot on the southwest corner of Manor and Pennsylvania Avenues; where a backstop, dugouts, scoreboard and fence were installed. The first official games, a doubleheader, were played on June 10, 1950. Opening day ceremonies included musical selections by the DHS marching band and an invocation by Father Daniel Hoy of St. Joseph's Catholic Church. Burgess Lee Hamilton threw out the first ball. In the opening contest, John Chilla, whose son and grandson eventually played in the league, tossed a five-hit gem for Pepperidge, beating the Moose 5-3. In the nightcap, Bill Stringer snacked the league's first homer, to help St. Anthony's edge the VFW 8-7.

The first Hist-O-Gram was just half a page long!

Readership continued to grow, and competition to guess the mystery photo became heated. Replies were often received within moments after the Hist-O-Gram hit the inboxes of the readership. As local newspapers lost their impact, the Hist-O-Gram became the town crier, and news of upcoming events could also be found.

When one realizes that the Hist-O-Gram came weekly, for free, from October 2010 until December 2017, one begins to realize the effort and magnitude of the undertaking. It was good, consistent, and spoke right to our need for nostalgia and a time long past. (All of the past issues can be found on the website).

Once Parry reached 80, he informed everyone that the Hist-O-Gram would come out once a month, starting January 2018. However, this part of the plan has to be altered. Parry suffered a serious fall, and has been hospitalized since December 1. His surgery was successful, but many weeks of rehab are in his immediate future.

Parry, you have given all of us a weekly gift. You informed many about the past, showed pictures of what was, and kept us abreast of upcoming events. You continued to serve as president until December 2016. You have given above and beyond of what was required of you, and we are all better people because of your devotion. During your recovery, you will need to remember that you have taught us all well by your example. We will not let this effort that you began die, though since you are not at the helm for the foreseeable future, it will become more the work of a committee, rather than one person. (No one knows how you did it single handedly.) Your job is not to worry about us, but concentrate on getting well. We all expect you back and you will always play a role in what we put out, though you will have to be a judge of what that role is.

Carol Grigson, Archivist
Downingtown Area Historical Society

So What Comes Next?

Has the Hist-O-Gram come to its end? Yes and No.

At the Downingtown Area Historical Society one of our goals is local history education, but delivering historical information to our community in the best way possible can be a challenge. The primary

means of communicating in recent years has been electronically - email, our website, social media, and the Hist-O-Gram. All of these, however, have varying audiences and achieve different results.

So as a Board we've taken a step back, evaluated our efforts, and have set several goals for 2018. Our goals are not set in stone and will continually be re-evaluated, but right now this is what we would like to do:

- **Replacement for the Hist-O-Gram:** Starting January 11, 2018, we will be putting out a new bi-monthly publication. Even though this is our final Hist-O-Gram, this new publication will:
 - Continue to include our popular “What and Where Is It?”, group photos, vintage ads, and free advertisements for non-profits.
 - Feature a main local history article as well as informational (and sometimes humorous) snippets of Downingtown history. Other regular items are also being considered.
 - Will be delivered via email the second and fourth Thursdays of each month. Similar to the Hist-O-Gram, issues of our new publication will be available on our website with links posted on Facebook.
 - Will be a work-in-progress! We will see what is popular and what is not. We will ask for feedback on the layout and design. As a result, our tenth issue may look different than our first.
- **We plan to update our website in 2018** to give it a fresh look and make it more interactive. If you have experience with web design and would like to volunteer your time and expertise in this area please contact us at 610-269-1709, or send us an email at dths1709@gmail.com.
- **We will continue to improve our presence on social media.** Last year at this time we had 890 “likes” for our Facebook page. Now, a year later, we are almost double that. We will continue to use Facebook, but will also explore other social media sites to reach the largest audiences as possible.

Jim Sundman, Vice President
Downingtown Area Historical Society

It is the bridge in Kerr Park



We realized that the last time we featured “Where and What Is It” it was not followed up with the location. But it is the concrete foot bridge in Kerr Park behind the Downingtown Library and next to the Sky’s the Limit All Abilities playground. It is one of two bridge built in the park in 1939 by the Works Progress Administration (WPA).

Access to latest historic “Then & Now” photo sequences

You can see all of the “Then & Now” morphed photo sequences of local historic sites via YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCIh25kTu3B_uVb6lhZku7mw/videos

Upcoming Clipping Events

Did you know that as part of our archival collection we have nearly 14,000 cards in our files that contain newspaper clippings? There are two upcoming opportunities at the Historical Society to help clip and paste newspaper articles for this collection. The sessions will be held at the Ashbridge House, our 308-year-old headquarters, next to the Chick-Fil-A restaurant in the Ashbridge Square Shopping Center on Route 30 in East Caln. The two sessions are:

- **Sunday, January 7, 1:00-4:00 PM**
- **Tuesday, January 9, 6:30-8:00 PM**

Officers of the Downingtown Area Historical Society

The Historical Society's officers include: President: Phil Dague; Vice President: Jim Sundman; Recording Secretary: Marion Piccolomini; Corresponding Secretary: Donna Capriotti; Treasurer: Lauren Fagan; Archivist: Carol Grigson; Directors: Harry Helms, Mike Dunn, Jay Worrall, Robin Ashby, Jordan Staub; Presidents Emeritus: Roger Grigson and Parry Desmond.

Free Ads for Non-Profits

Farmers Market

Downingtown Farmer's Market will be located in Kerr Park every Saturday from 9 AM to 1 PM.

Community Luncheon

Central Presbyterian Church, 100 W Uwchlan Ave, Downingtown, holds a monthly Community Luncheon from 11 AM until 1 PM on the first Thursday of each month, October through May. Their popular chili, chicken corn noodle, vegetable beef, and cream of potato soups are sold, along with sandwiches, salad platters, homemade desserts and beverages. Gluten-free options are available. For take-out service, call 610-269-1576 and ask for the kitchen. Bring a friend, meet a neighbor, or come alone and enjoy good food and fellowship.

Senior Center Programs & Activities

You'll find information about the programs and activities at the Downingtown Area Senior Center via:

www.downingtownerseniors.org

Lyme Disease

The Lyme Disease Association of Southeastern Pennsylvania, an education and support group for patients and caregivers who have been affected by Lyme Disease, meets on the third Wednesday of every month at 7 PM at the Kennett Friends Meeting House on Route 82 (125 W. Sickel St. Kennett Square). Meetings are free and all are welcome. Check www.lymepa.org for directions and program information.

Brochure on DARC Classes & Activities

You can gain access to the latest Downingtown Area Recreational Consortium brochure, listing all classes and activities, at: www.darc.info/. 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.

Library Newsletter

You can sign up to get the Downingtown Library's newsletter via: <http://downingtownlibrary.us12.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=3a92a237c3786688e0e00b4de&id=8f7d079092>

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, <http://josephspeople.org/our-chapters/downingtown/>, 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: cheryl.spaulding@josephspeople.org.