

Twenty-five years ago on April 24, 1917, a special meeting of the Borough Council was held at the home of George B. Crosley on West Lancaster Avenue. At that meeting the Council appointed a Borough Superintendent. As I had already worked two days on this job I have finished twenty-five years of service tonight. The members of that Council were Frank J. McGraw, President; Dr. Edward Kerr, George B. Crosley, George Fisher, Dr. Joseph Huggins, S. Arthur Glauner. John D. McFarlan was Chief Burgess.

On this occasion I should be very happy, but I'm not. I feel like the man in a story many of you have heard Reverend Nichols relate of a man and his wife who had lived together for twenty-five years and during that time they had not gotten along very well. After the husband had been dead for sometime the wife thought she would like to get in touch with him. She went to see a Medium and to her surprise one night she was told she could talk to John, her husband, if she wanted to ask him a few questions. So she said to John, "Are you happy?" and he answered, "Yes, Mary." "Are you very happy?" and he answered, "Yes, Mary." "Are you happier than when you were on earth with me?" and he answered, "Yes." She said, "John, tell me, what is Heaven like?" And he said, "Mary, I am not in Heaven." And neither am I right now.

Lee Hamilton, Chairman of the Program Committee and I have talked about this meeting as far back as last December and for a long time I have planned just what I was going to do and say, but after getting here and after the way these fellows accepted my invitation to be here, that doesn't seem to amount to anything. The friendships I have made over these twenty-five years mean more to me than anything I may have done for the Borough of Downingtown.

Lee is the fifth Chief Burgess I have worked for. The others were: John D. McFarlan, E. Vinton Phillips, J. Harry Reed and Calvin G. Ax. Perhaps you are wondering just when these fellows were in the Borough Council. Arthur Glauner and Joseph Huggins were in the Council that hired me. Robert Ash 1918

Warren Henderson 1922 - 4 yrs

W. Perry Tyson 1923

William Carey

Robert Laird 1924

George Foreman

Frank Swarner 1926

Frank Diffenderfer

James McGowan 1930

Ellis Y. Brown 1931

Raymond Greenleaf

Chandler Roberts 1932

Nelson Dennis 1937

Warren Latshaw

Herbert Ash

Theodore Griffith 1938

Mark Shaw

Thomas Park 1940

Ray Sheeler 1941
Chester Brown 1942
A. L. Schneider 1942

Eleven members have died: Frank Parke
Joseph Moulder
Palmer Hughes
Dr. Kerr
Frank McGraw
Samuel Black
Guyon Miller
Morris Pawling
George Crosley
George Fisher
Allen Keim

I had really worked for the Borough approximately ~~two~~^{two} months previous to this appointment as Borough Superintendent as an engineer and inspector on the Sewage Disposal Plant. When I took over this job practically every street in Downingtown had had a ditch dug lengthwise of it from one end to the other except one square on Washington Avenue between Green Street and Chestnut Street and a part of Bradford Avenue. Within the next eighteen months there were 504 cross ditches dug to allow people to connect with the sewer. During this eighteen months the Army was sending between three and four hundred solid wheeled trucks over Lancaster Avenue every day and what money we had for spending on streets was put on Lancaster Avenue. Some of you men remember the arguments we had with the West Chester Street Railway Company about a turn out, and the meetings with the County Commissioners about a bridge across the Brandywine.

On October 6, 1919, the Borough passed an Ordinance for the collection of ashes which was started on October 26, 1919. I can still remember how Bob Ash and Arthur Glauner used to argue which was the more important, the collection of ashes or the collection of garbage, but it didn't last very long because on January 4, 1921, we passed an ordinance providing for the collection of garbage and collections started May 1st.

In 1920 Guyon Miller asked me to make a Budget and show how many streets could be built and repaired for five thousand dollars. My report did not show any materials for Lancaster Avenue. Mr. Miller took notice to this immediately and said, "If you have nerve enough to go ahead with this program, so have I." And that year we did not spend any money on Lancaster Avenue.

Somebody conceived the bright idea of selling our Franchise on West Lancaster Avenue back to the Street Railway Company for ten thousand dollars. We took this money and built Brandywine Avenue from the railroad to Lancaster Avenue. Looking up the cost of this street we paid John Galt two dollars per ton for stone, F. O. B. cars Downingtown and road oil eighteen cents per gallon applied. The

matter then was taken up with the State Highway Department and the County Commissioners to get some aid from the State to build Lancaster Avenue and from the time the matter of the street was first brought up in 1920 till it was finished in 1922, the Borough Council held fifty eight special meetings about it. The street cost us \$63,960 of which \$50,000 were in bonds. Lest I forget, we are paying the last of those bonds on July 1st of this year. The State spent \$105,000 on Lancaster Avenue besides the amount spent by the Borough and the County built the bridges across the creek at a cost of \$42,000.

During the construction of Lancaster Avenue there was no other way of getting across the creek except driving down to the Davy Company and up Laurel Road to Bradford Avenue. The Business Men's Club conceived the idea of buying the old trolley bridge and erecting it on Pennsylvania Avenue. This they did without any cost to the Borough. The Borough ordained and opened the street and made the approaches to the bridge.

Shortly after the finishing of this street the Borough Council started to talk of a Municipal Building, but nothing was done for awhile as we had to build a Water Works. On December 11, 1923, a special election was held to borrow \$135,000 to rebuild our water works and improve our distribution system in town. From April 1923, when the Borough Council started to consider this water plant until it was finally completed in June 1925, seven special meetings on this project were held, three of which were open meetings to the Public. I mentioned this fact as a comparison to fifty-eight meetings held in connection with the building of Lancaster Avenue. This improvement consisted of the building of a Dam on the Copeland Stream, a Filter Plant and the laying of 17,000 feet of water mains and a Pumping Station on the Beaver Creek.

After the water works were completed the question again arose of building a Municipal Building. The Borough not having sufficient borrowing capacity as the water loans had increased our indebtedness to nine and two tenths per cent of our assessed valuation, a Holding Company was formed to build the Municipal Building. This building cost \$43,890 and was completed on October 1st, 1926. The Borough Council immediately leased the building from the Holding Company at a rental of Building and Loan \$3,000. Interest \$750 and with our operating expenses made an outlay of approximately \$5,000, per year. Quarters were leased to the Post Office and American Legion and office space to Harry Deets, giving us an income of \$2,200 per year. Our original lease was for twelve years. The lease was then renewed for a period of eight years, but with increased payment of taxes and delinquent taxes we were able to pay for the building in March 1941.

In the opening of Pennsylvania Avenue in 1921 the Borough had incurred considerable land damages which had not been paid. Again the Business Men's Club came into the picture and purchased some land

from the Roberts' estate and Kerr Park was started. Besides the land purchased by the Business Men's Club, land was donated by the Harbison Walker Company, Downingtown Iron Works, Downingtown Paper Company and later Thomas W. Downing, which gave us approximately forty-five acres of land for a park.

I find reference to a fire alarm system as far back as 1890. In 1930 the Borough installed our present fire alarm system which I think has worked out very well. Frank Swarner was Chairman of the Fire Committee and he presented the Borough with considerable of the equipment we now have in.

In 1932 the Junior-Senior High School was built on Manor Avenue and after considerable effort on the part of the Borough, the State Highway Department was persuaded to replace the bridges across the Race and Beaver Creek that had been built in 1801. In 1937 the State Highway Department paved the street from Lancaster Avenue to the Borough line.

In 1940 the Borough purchased two pieces of fire apparatus costing \$20,000. These were the first new pieces of fire apparatus that the Borough purchased since 1908.

In December 1933, on the advent of the C. W. A, which was followed up by the W. P. A., the Borough has laid 5,400 feet of water pipe; 3,900 feet of storm sewer; 2,000 feet of sanitary sewer; 9,300 feet of curb and nearly five miles of streets have been surfaced or resurfaced.

FINANCES

When I started to work for the Borough in 1917 the tax rate was six mills, the assessed valuation was \$2,083,000, the bonded indebtedness was \$74,000.

In 1921 the Borough borrowed \$50,000 to build Lancaster Avenue. The tax rate was 11.5 mills, the total indebtedness was \$105,000.

In 1924 the Borough borrowed \$135,000 to build the water works, the tax rate was 14.5 mills. The bonded indebtedness was \$232,000, the floating debt \$7,000. The assessed valuation was \$2,502,000.

In 1929 the first large amount of tax liens were entered, \$938.00, our bonded indebtedness that year was \$203,000.

In 1937 taxes liened were \$5,107.06, the accumulated tax liens from 1929 to 1937 amounted to \$32,740. The assessed valuation was \$3,630,960. Bonded indebtedness was \$137,000, temporary loans \$21,000. The Borough this year made a bond issue of \$25,000 to pay off these temporary loans and to use any part remaining for the building of streets. This money was borrowed at a net interest rate of 1.49 per cent.

Today we have a bonded indebtedness of \$93,000, divided as follows: \$74,000 water bonds, \$15,000 funding bonds, \$4,000 street bonds. This year we will pay off \$14,000 in bonds and our indebtedness will then be \$79,000 just \$5,000 more than when I came to work for the Borough twenty-five years ago.

"It's a wonderful thing this glamour which time seems to paint over things remembered. It's only the pleasant things which stand out, the hardships are forgotten, but what does it matter if an artist changes a color here or there to make a better picture as a whole."