

The Printz Gazette

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Produced By The Tincum Township Historical Society

Spring 1995

A Historic Start

By Ethel Richardson

On the night of October 28, 1987, 14 residents met in the town hall with former commissioner, Nick Canzanese, to organize a Historical Society in Tincum. Officers that were elected were: President - Harvey Lehman, Vice-president - Harry Laica, Treasurer - Tom Keenan Jr, and Recording Secretary - Ethel Richardson. The purpose of the organization was to try to gather and maintain items of historical importance in our town and put together a book.

In May of 1988 they held their first flea market in governor printz park. It has been held in June every year since. In 1993 the book was published celebrating our 350th anniversary, thanks to the hard work of the members. As of today they meet on

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Who We Are

by Bill Moller

Since this is our inaugural issue of the Printz Gazette, a short introduction is in order. We are the Tincum Township Historical Society which was formed a few years ago to produce a book about the township (copies are still available for \$10). With this mission accomplished, we need to go on to do other things to help in preserving the history of Tincum Township. One of our next missions is to make the historic information that we collect available to the township residence. This newsletter is one of the ways that we will be using to inform you about your townships history. The first few issues of the newsletter will be printed and distributed for all in the township. After that the newsletter will only be available as a benefit of membership in the Society (membership application is on the bottom of page 3). Tincum School, Township Hall and the public library will also receive a copy of the newsletter.

Other areas of education we will be exploring are seminars about local historical topics or places in the township, field tours of relevant sites, and the annual flea market and history fair. One of the most important things we need is members. Without members, we can not perform all of the things we would like to do to help preserve our rich historical past for ourselves and for the future residence of Tincum.

We need your help in collecting and preserving the past through old photos and other memorabilia. If you have any old photos of Tincum of long ago, or not so long ago, and do not want them, we would gladly accept any such gift. If you have some old photos but do not want to give them away, we would like to make a copy of them for our records.

In addition to photos, we collect other things that have a link to our past. We have an old program from 1938 for a play about the beginning years at Tincum. Also in our collection are old maps, programs from church and school events, and many other items. In the future we are also thinking of starting to take down verbal personal histories of the people in the town by recording their recollections of the past. If you would be interest in writing

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The Lighthouse
by Bill Moller

Believe it or not but Tinicum Township did have a lighthouse at one time (there is a picture of it in our book). It was located on the wooded tract of land behind the Manor field. If you go looking for it, walk back by the north bound on ramp for I-95 . It is a bit swampy back there. The only things that are left are some foundations from the light keepers house and some of the footings from the tower itself. Also back there are some other footings from the radio transmission towers built there after the lighthouse was dismantled.

The lighthouse was called the "Schooner Ledge Rear Range Lighthouse". For those of you wondering, there was a "Front Range Lighthouse" just off the edge of the bank of the Delaware River over in Eddystone, near where the coal fired generating plant is now. In the map below the left circle is where the "Front" light was and the right circle is where the "Rear" light was. The two lighthouses were called "range" lights and would work in tandem to show where the channel was in the river. When a ship would sail up or down the river the captain would align his ship so the rear light was just above the front light. As long as the lights were one over the other the ship was in the channel.

The lighthouse was installed in 1880 and lit for the first time on December 15. Some time around 1907 the lighthouse was moved 350 feet to the east

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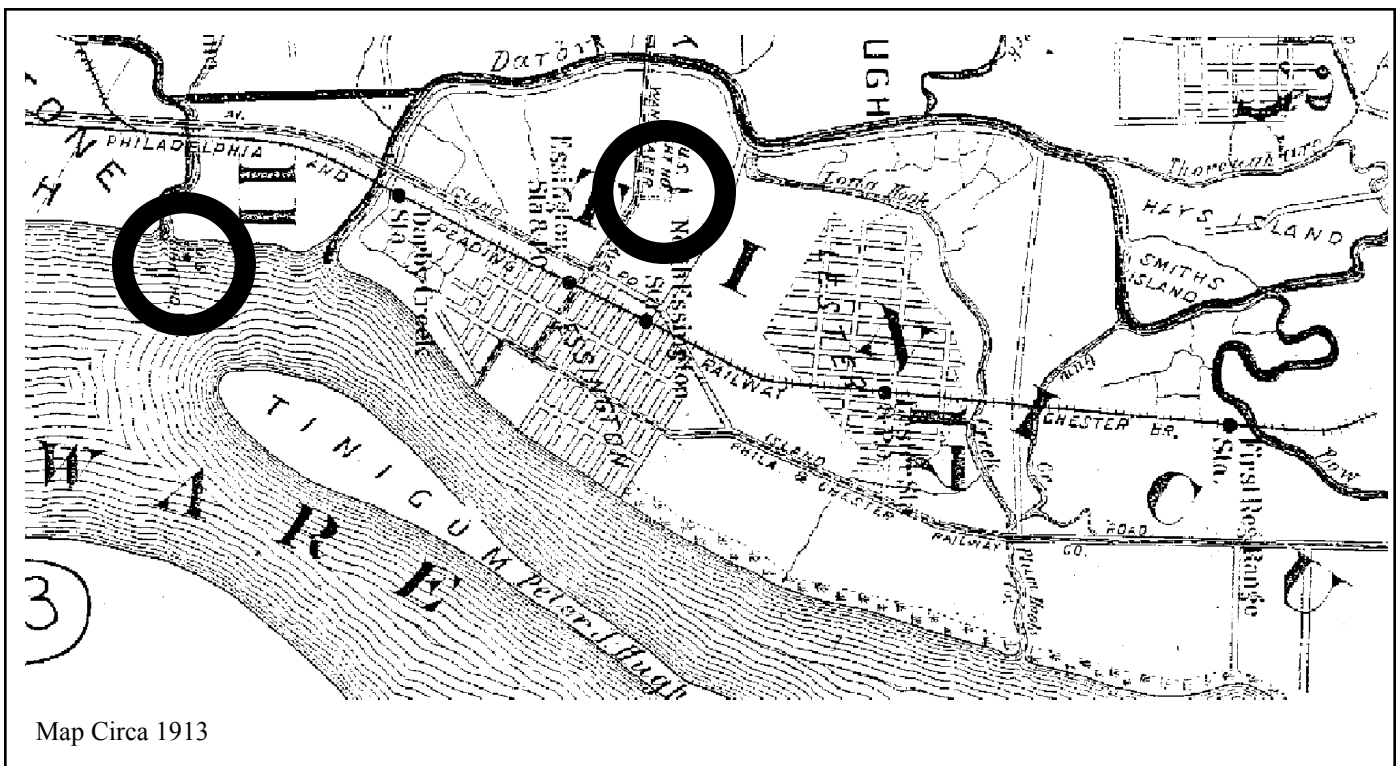
Tinicum's Waterfowl and Feathered Marsh Dwellers
By William Duncan

When the Europeans entered the Delaware Valley, waterfowl were so abundant that someone only needed to raise a pole into the air to bring down enough for the evening meal. In those days before increased human habitation a large variety and quantity of birds visited the area twice a year, in the spring and again in the fall. There were ducks, geese, reed birds, egrets, red wing blackbirds, rail birds, cranes, snipes, swamp wrens and many more. Some were edible and others were just nice to gaze upon. Sighting these feathered creatures was quite a spectacle.

Some waterfowl were transient and others made their homes among the reeds, spatterdocks, wild rice, elderberry and cat-o-nine-tails. There was abundant food for them here. The wild rice was the main staple. For those that needed meat in their diet, there were also snakes, frogs, lizards and snails. There was also shelter from the weather in the marshes and on the river in its' many coves and inlets.

As a boy, I would watch during the fall as the reed birds and blackbirds filled the sky and would listen as they filled the air with their songs as they winged their way west along the river, and then in the spring with an easterly migration. Before night fall, many would come to rest in the nearby marshes to spend the night and to feed. In the morning, the flock's departure would blacken

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Map Circa 1913

The Lighthouse (from page 2)

to come more in line with the newly dredged shipping channel. This is why there are two sets of foundations, and two different views in pictures taken of the lighthouse. Around 1919 the lighthouse was turned off and the "Chester Range Lighthouse" took up the cause of safeguarding the shipping lanes. After that, the lighthouse tower was dismantled and loaded onto railroad cars for shipment. It was just last year that we finally found out where the lighthouse went to. Our lighthouse is alive and well in Wisconsin in the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore on Michigan Island. So if you are up that way, stop by and take a look, although now it is painted white instead of the original black. But you don't need to go all the way to Wisconsin to see what our lighthouse looked like. There is a sister lighthouse built in the same year as ours across the river in Billingsport New Jersey. It is just to the north of Billingsport Rd between Second and Third Streets in the village of Billingsport (west of Paulsboro).

Tinicum's Waterfowl (from page 2)

the sky. At any one time a thousand birds could be viewed either flying overhead or feeding from nature's fair. During the hot summer months the snipe or killdeer (if you prefer) ran along the water's edge collecting small bits of food. The fall would bring in the ducks and geese down from the north to join them. They would stay until the river and marshes became frozen and food became scarce. Then they would fly further south, returning in spring.

As the area became populated and industrialized, the size of the marshlands decreased as did the number and variety of water fowl. A part of what was once here is preserved in the John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge.

The Island

by William Duncan

The island of Tinicum was once a thriving farming community. The soil was rich and fertile from the deposits left by the rise and fall of the tides of the Delaware and Schykill Rivers. Swedish settlers in 1643 found an area covered by water and transformed it.

The Swedish settlers reclaimed the marsh land by erecting a series of dikes along the Delaware River and several surrounding creeks. Once the dikes were in place, drainage ditches were dug to obtain dry areas on which to plant crops. The system was very clever. It contained a sluice that allowed water to leave with the tide but not re-enter.

During the American Revolution, the dikes were destroyed by the colonists to delay the advance of the British forces on the city of Philadelphia. They flooded the entire area. The exact date of this destruction is not known. Several of these dikes were restored.

This area along the Delaware River was damaged by a storm in the 1930s. During the Great Depression the WPA reconstructed parts of the system. Later, during the 1940s the Army Core of Engineers began deepening the river channel in anticipation of larger ship traffic. The silt from the river was deposited within the area of dikes covering the evidence that farms once existed here.

Until the construction of I-95 there was still evidence of the drainage system used to reclaim the land. Even today, there are remains of the original dikes along Darby Creek. Presently it is used to contain water for what is known as the lagoon north of I-95. If you travel north along route 420 towards Prospect Park, look to your left as you approach Darby creek to see some of the remaining dikes.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

The Tinicum Township Historical Society is looking for new members with an interest in local history. If you think you would like to join us in preserving our local history, please either fill in the info below and mail it to us at the address on the last page of this newsletter or call us at 521-5701 and leave us a message. Dues are \$5.00 a year which includes this newsletter four times a year.

Name: _____

Address: _____

: _____

Phone: _____

A Historic Start (from page 1)

the third Thursday of the month at 7:30 PM in the new building in the park. All are welcome to join. Remember, more can be accomplished with a large organization.

Who We Are (from page 1)

a historic article for this newsletter, please call us at 521-5701 or get in touch with one of our members. We are also interested in hearing what you think of this newsletter or the Historical Society in general. Please write or call and let us know what you think, better yet, join us and help us serve our community better.

The Flea Market

Once again we will be having our annual flea market down in Governor Printz Park on June 10 (rain date June 17) 9:00 to 3:00. Table spaces are \$10.00 pre-register or \$12.00 the day of the sale. Rest rooms will be available this year at the new building in the park. Please call our new phone number 521-5701 for information on the sale. The Historical Society will provide entertainment and have refreshments for sale. New this year will be a Historical Fair section for all of the local Historical societies to have a history display. As always there are no unauthorized vehicles allowed in the park, and no food concessions allowed. Parking is available along 2nd street and Taylor avenue.

Newsletter Staff

The Printz Gazette is compiled by the following members: William Duncan, Bill Moller, Ann Phillips, Chris Templin, & Helen Ward.

Coming Events

On October 19 we will have a talk about the use of PC computers and how they can be used in historical societies. The start time will be at 8:00 PM and run for about an hour. Everyone is welcome to attend and admission is free but please call us to reserve a spot. We need to find out how many would like to attend to be able to reserve proper seating. Some of the topics that will be covered are the use of scanners, printers, cd-rom drives and other hardware devices. Also to be discussed are the software end of things such as newsletters and databases. Refreshments will be served so it should be a good time for all.

Acquisitions

The Tincum Township Historical Society is always looking for items of historic importance from the township. Please keep us in mind before tossing any old family photos or other old items. We not only collect photos but old programs from the schools or churches, any kind of keep sake from special events, posters of carnivals or parades, old maps or blue prints of buildings. To say it another way, we collect just about ANYTHING. If you think you might have anything of interest, just give us a call on our new phone number 521-1643.

We have had quite a few new additions to our archives since the first of the year. Lucy Gianchristoforo donated a picture showing the manor property housing development circa 1950. Ethel Richardson donated a bronze medallion given to Mary Richards from the Lester fire company circa 1940. Jerry Burrier donated a large aerial photo of the reading's darby creek train yards circa 1940. Chris templin donated a photo of margret fox, a long time resident, circa 1910.

The Tincum Township Historical Society
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