



Haverford Township Historical Society



HAVERFORD AND “HAVERTOWN” ARE NOT THE SAME

By Richard D. Kerr

Most people who know and use the place names “Haverford” and “Havertown” do not give much thought to them at all. Those who do might wonder why both of these two similar, but different, names exist, and whether there is any difference between them. There is a difference.

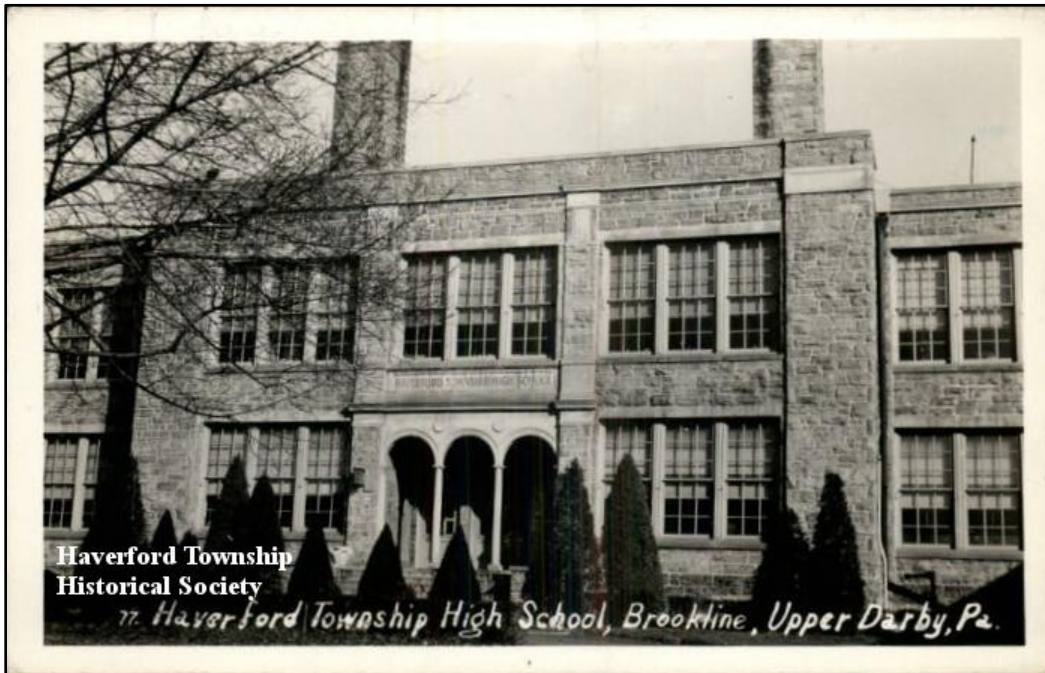
HAVERFORD

“Haverford” was one of the first townships established by William Penn in 1682, in what was then Chester County in the British colony of Pennsylvania. The name’s origin stems from the area of Haverfordwest in Wales, from which many of the Welsh Quaker settlers came. In the United States today, Haverford endures from Penn’s time as a legislatively established legal entity known as a township. More formally, it is the Township of Haverford, in the County of Delaware (since 1789) in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. In Pennsylvania, cities, townships and boroughs are types of “municipalities.” It is designated as a “first-class” township due to its population size. The township covers just over 10 square miles and has a population just over 48,000 residents. In population it ranks 2nd-largest in Delaware County (after Upper Darby) and 16th-largest in Pennsylvania (after Harrisburg). It is served by its municipal government as well as the School District of Haverford Township.

HAVERTOWN

“Havertown” is an arbitrary name dreamed up by the U. S. Post Office Department (now the United States Postal Service or USPS) for use starting on January 1, 1946. It was invented to serve as a replacement name for an existing post office and its postal delivery area. As such, the postal area known as “Havertown” is not a legal entity and has no government. The “Havertown” postal area is smaller than Haverford Township, and bits of it actually extend into Upper Darby Township and Lower Merion Township. It exists as a designation of the USPS for its use in organizing addresses and delivering mail. The name or its service area can be altered by the USPS at any time in the future. The “Havertown” post office had previously been named “Llanerch” and is actually a branch of the “Upper Darby” post office (which similarly is not the same entity or area as Upper Darby Township). Technically, nothing before 1946 took place in “Havertown” since no such name existed before then. For example, the post office address for the old Haverford High School (now part of the Middle School) on Darby Road was once “Brookline, Upper Darby, Pa.,” as shown on the old picture postcard below.

Additional post office delivery areas that serve other parts of Haverford Township today are named “Ardmore,” “Bryn Mawr,” “Drexel Hill,” “Haverford” and “Wynnewood.” All of these post offices serve areas in neighboring townships, too. The fact that the “Haverford” one includes part of Lower Merion Township only makes the Haverford / Havertown name situation even more confusing. As examples, the Haverford School is in Lower Merion, the nearby Friends School Haverford is in Haverford Township, and Haverford College is mostly in Haverford Township but extends into Lower Merion and technically has an address in Montgomery County.



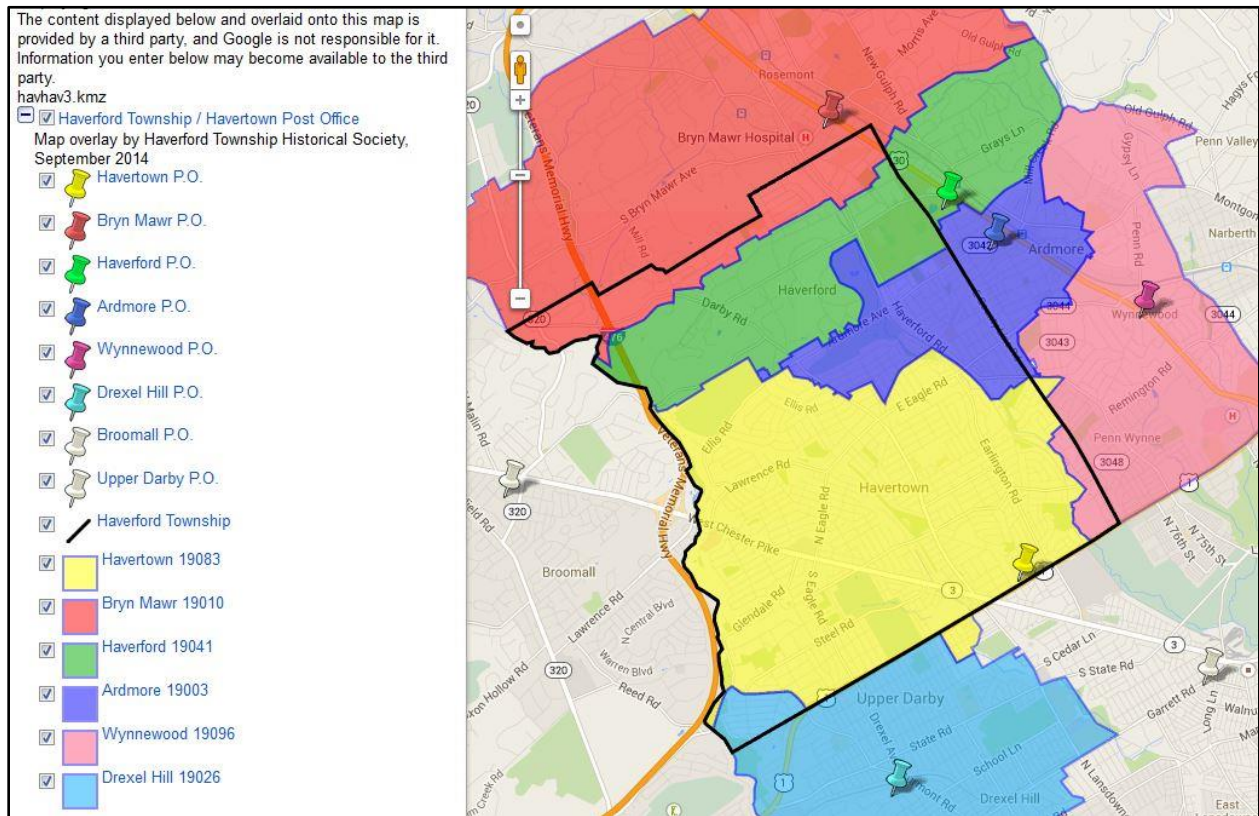
Note the address shown on this 1930s postcard of Haverford High School.

HOW ARE HAVERFORD AND “HAVERTOWN” RELATED?

The U. S. Post Office has established post offices throughout the history of the United States. The first ones in “rural” areas, as our area was until the 1900s, were generally in crossroad stores or inns. They were run under contract by the business owners, who served as postmasters. Later, ticket agents in railroad stations served as postmasters as well. Fittingly enough, an early post office established in Haverford Township in 1830 was called “Haverford.” As the population slowly grew, other post offices were added within the township. Then in 1871 a post office called “Haverford College” was created in a railroad station in nearby Lower Merion Township, to serve the college and its surrounding area. Following that, the U. S. Post Office decided in 1882 that the “Haverford” post office should be renamed to avoid confusion with this “Haverford College” post office, and the name “Manoa” was chosen to replace “Haverford.” Ten years later, the Post Office shortened the “Haverford College” name to “Haverford,” but it is not the same office or area as the original 1830 “Haverford” postal designation.

In the end, the evolution of place names during the course of gradual development, combined with the actions of the U. S. Post Office, have only complicated answering the simple question, “Where do you live?” Many, many people technically live in one place, but use a different place name for their postal address. As examples, no one in neighboring Lower Merion, Radnor, or Marple townships has a mailing address that includes the proper, legal township name as the “city.” Only Haverford Township residents must add the word “Township” after the township name for the sake of clarity. Similarly, our neighbors have been spared from having a concocted “Havertown”-style post office name thrust upon them, such as “Lowmertown,” “Radtown,” “Martown,” or “Updartown” (for Upper Darby).

Today six post offices serve Haverford Township. The map below illustrates their present service areas (shaded) and their actual post office building locations (pushpins), in relation to the Haverford Township boundary. Note that five of the six post office buildings fall outside of the Haverford township boundary, four of these having been located along the Lancaster Road corridor, for ease of delivering and picking up mail being transported in bulk between post office facilities.



1. The **Havertown** postal area (yellow) serves more than half of Haverford Township. It also includes a small section of Upper Darby Township and another in Lower Merion Township in Montgomery County.
2. The **Bryn Mawr** postal area (red) is actually mostly in Radnor Township, with a substantial portion in Lower Merion Township plus a smaller band stretching across the northern edge of Haverford Township.
3. The **Haverford** postal area (green) is more than half within Haverford Township, with the remainder in Lower Merion. Only the people who live in the “Haverford” postal area of Haverford Township can unequivocally answer the question “Where do you live?” by saying just “Haverford.”
4. The **Ardmore** postal area (dark blue) is about evenly split between Haverford and Lower Merion townships.
5. The **Wynnewood** postal area (pink) is mostly in Lower Merion Township.
6. The **Drexel Hill** postal area (light blue) is mostly in Upper Darby Township, but includes the southwest corner of Haverford Township. In the USPS organization chart, the “Drexel Hill” post office is a branch of the “Upper Darby” post office, similar to “Havertown.”

The map does not have shading for two other neighboring postal areas that do not now directly serve Haverford Township, but it does show their post office building locations with white pushpins. These are the “Broomall” post office to the west in Marple Township, and the “Upper Darby” post office in Upper Darby Township.

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