



Haverford Township Historical Society



HAVERFORD TOWNSHIP'S "JAPANESE BEETLE QUARANTINE STATION"

By Richard D. Kerr

In the 1920s an unusual type of bug was discovered and captured at a nursery in New Jersey. It took a year before biologists identified it as an obscure beetle from Japan that had somehow traveled to America. It thrived in America far better than it did in its remote, colder habitat in Japan. Efforts to eradicate the beetles failed, and they rapidly spread through New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Delaware. Government efforts then focused on slowing the spread, since the economic impact on the American produce, flower and shrub industries was unknown and feared.

So it was that the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture established a quarantine office and station "on Eagle Road near Oakmont, Delaware County" in 1932. Its purpose was to inspect shipments of produce and nursery products which might contain the insidious beetles and their larvae. That building, which was sold off by 1935, went through several uses before becoming the first section of the Philadelphia Chewing Gum Corporation's factory building in the 1960s. The site now hosts the new Haverford Area YMCA.

Even today, quarantine efforts continue in America against the Japanese beetle. It has spread to all states touching the Mississippi River and all states east of there, but states like California, Arizona and Colorado are still vigilantly trying to slow its ceaseless westward progress.

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