



Haverford Township Historical Society



NEWSPAPERS IN HAVERFORD TOWNSHIP

By Richard D. Kerr

Despite being the “chroniclers of record” for their coverage areas, local newspapers themselves are poorly documented in terms of their evolution, ownership and operation. The following is an attempt to pull together a summary history of known sub-county local newspapers that have served Haverford Township, in chronological order.

Bethesda Herald (1893-1894)

This newspaper was a small four-page newsprint publication issued monthly “in the interest of the Bethesda Methodist Episcopal Church, Manoa, Pa.” The Haverford Township Historical Society newspaper collection includes Volume 1, Nos. 1 through 8 except for No. 6.

Star and Guide (1905-about 1911)

According to [Pennsylvania Newspapers – A Bibliography and Union List](#) (Ruth Salisbury, Editor; Pennsylvania Library Association; Pittsburgh; 1969), which is a unified summary compilation of newspapers known to have been published in Pennsylvania, the community of Llanerch was served in its early years by the weekly *Star and Guide* newspaper from 1905 to about 1911. I am unaware of any extant copies of this newspaper.

Haverford Township News (1927-1957)

Township News (1957-1968)

Havertown Times (1968-at least 1972)

The *Haverford Township News* was established in Brookline in 1927 as a local weekly newspaper. At that time, Philadelphia-born Armand N. Spitz was a district reporter in the city for the *Camden Courier*. He later recalled that he “acquired a sneaking desire to have a newspaper of my own.” By 1928, he had signed on as Editor of Haverford’s new independent weekly. Within three months, he was able to purchase the paper, founding the Spitz Publishing Company and fulfilling his desire as both editor and publisher.

Schoolgirl Harriett Holmes was another early figure at the *Haverford Township News*. She recalled being hired at age 14 (in about 1929) after “promising to do anything, even sweep the floors.” After graduating from high school, she worked for the Philadelphia *Evening Bulletin* because she could not afford college. Later Harriett Wittenborg, she had a long career as a journalist and activist before dying in Boston at age 90.

Vera Golden also worked at the *Haverford Township News* in its early days, at 2114 Darby Road. Her mother, Gertrude Golden, served as a District Superintendent of the Philadelphia Board of Education and eventual chair of its public relations department. Vera took an active interest in local civic affairs.

She was Editor of the newspaper by 1933, when she called a meeting to discuss plans to establish a public library in Haverford Township. This led to the creation of the Haverford Township Free Library. She would also serve on the township's Planning Commission and volunteer with the Haverford Township Historical Society. Armand Spitz, too, immersed himself in local civic affairs, co-founding the Haverford Township Chamber of Commerce in 1933 and serving a stint as president of the Haverford Township Free Library.

The masthead of the Friday, May 4, 1934 edition (Vol. 6, No. 23) read, "Haverford Township News / An Independent Newspaper Published Every Friday for the Advancement and Betterment of Haverford Township / Suburban Publications, Inc. / Publishers of the Haverford Township News, The Wayne Suburban, The Main Liner, Our Town (Narberth), and the News of Bala-Cynwyd. / A. M. Ehart, President; Philip A. Livingston, Vice-President; Armand N. Spitz, Associate Editor. / Office: 1619 E. Darby Road, Brookline, Llanerch P.O., Penna. / Telephone: Hilltop 3600 / Vera Golden ... Editor / G. H. Thomas, Jr. ... Adv. Mgr. / Subscription: \$1.50 per year / Entered as Second Class Matter April 20, 1928, at the Post Office at Upper Darby, Pa., under the Act of March 3, 1879." Individual copies were three cents.

Jean Shiley, Haverford High School 1929 graduate and 1932 Olympic gold medalist, recalled in an oral interview that in the aftermath of her father losing his job in the Great Depression, she rushed from Philadelphia straight to the *Haverford Township News* office one day in the mid-1930s to borrow a typewriter, after fortuitously talking her way into a Depression-era job with the Works Progress Administration (WPA), that started that very night.

Brent P. Abbatantuono, in his history of Spitz's planetarium work, "Armand Spitz - Seller of Stars" (International Planetarium Society, Inc.) states, "In the elections of 1932, Armand endorsed several candidates from the "wrong" (losing) party. Some residents disagreed with him so strongly they burned him in effigy. During the Depression, Spitz and the *Township News* suffered. Supporting banks and advertisers found themselves unable to pay for their space. Although he accepted scrip as payment and bartered goods for various companies' advertising space in the paper, Armand could not provide enough financial support to sustain the newspaper so both he and the *Township News* were forced into bankruptcy in 1932. [... He then went overseas, and] upon his return [from Paris, France], Spitz renewed his acquaintance with and began dating Vera Golden, whom he knew from the *Township News*. [...] After a brief courtship, they married."

Annual issues of the Chester Times Yearbook and Almanac of Delaware County Pennsylvania list the *Haverford Township News* as founded in 1927, based in the community of Brookline, and published on Fridays. It showed Armand N. Spitz at the helm as Editor through the 1936 yearbook issue, then listed Odell Hauser as Editor in 1937. (He had been political editor of the Philadelphia *Public Ledger* in about 1922 and *lived* at 130 East Hathaway Lane in Merwood.) Kennison Cook was listed as Editor in 1938 to 1942, and George Walker from 1944 through at least 1948. (He lived in Llanerch in the 1940s.) The 1952 yearbook lists George K. Barry as news editor, with Thursday indicated as the day of publication.

From 1947 to 1950, Charles Adshead Wright was Managing Editor of both the *Haverford Township News* and the *Lower Merion Township News*, based in Ardmore. By this time, these two neighboring local weekly newspapers (along with the Borough of Narberth's weekly *Our Town*) were owned by the Tri-County Publishing Company. The *Haverford Township News* address in this era was 3621 East Darby Road. In 1957 the Haverford and Lower Merion newspapers were consolidated under the simplified name *Township News*, which ran until 1968. In that year there was another name change to *The Havertown Times* ("Combined with Township News"), which showed an office at 2 Brookline Boulevard and was issued on Thursdays until at least 1972. Due to the confusing succession of post office names

that have served portions of Haverford Township over the years, the “town” address for these Haverford newspapers is variously listed as Upper Darby, Brookline, Haverford, Llanerch and Havertown, but these offices were all physically in Haverford Township. A *Havertown Times* from 1973 shows an address at 39 State Road, Media PA.

The Haverford Township Historical Society holds a handful of issues of the *Haverford Township News* (as well as a few issues of *The Havertown Times*) in its collection, mostly containing articles about the formation of the Society itself. In addition, the Pennsylvania State Library (Rare Collections Library) in Harrisburg holds the following issues of the *Haverford Township News* in the 1952 through 1957 range (6 years): 2/7/1952-10/29/1953; 11/12/1953-12/30/1953; 1/7/1954-12/26/1954; Jan. 1955-Dec. 1955; Jan. 1956-Dec. 1956; and Jan. 1957-Dec. 1957.

West Chester Pike Leader (1931-at least 1932)

The Haverford Township Historical Society’s newspaper collection includes issues of this local weekly for the period listed. Despite its name and its office address in Newtown Square, this newspaper seems to have covered the Ardmore trolley line route along Darby Road as well as the West Chester Pike line, advertising that it served not only the communities of Llanerch, Manoa, Broomall and Newtown Square, but also Brookline and South Ardmore. Howard W. Lees served as Editor.

Eagle Herald (1934 at least)

The Society’s digital collection includes scans of some issues of this small, very local weekly newspaper, from the era noted in the heading.

Manoa Herald (by 1939-at least 1940)

The Society’s digital collection also includes scans of issues of this small weekly newspaper, from the era noted. Whether the *Manoa Herald* was a successor to the *Eagle Herald* is not clear. (The neighborhood name “Manoa” gradually expanded to include neighborhoods, mainly along North Eagle Road north of West Chester Pike, which originally had “Eagle” in their names.)

Havertown Leader (1969-at least 1983)

The *Havertown Leader* was part of a family of “Leader” newspapers in Delaware County. The *County Leader* claimed to date from 1931 and survived until 1983. It was originally based in Lansdowne, then was listed as being in Broomall in Marple Township, and by 1937 was listed in Newtown Square. Frank M. Longstreth Jr. served as Editor by 1936 to 1938, then Martin Longstreth in 1939 to 1944, and Dorothy Longstreth in 1946 to at least 1952, by which time her name was Dorothy Longstreth Gill. Publishers included Gerald S. Fuller (by 1956 to 1968) and Andrew J. Audet (1968 to 1983). The *Havertown Leader* launched in late 1969, published semi-monthly at first, at about mid-month and near the end of the month. It changed in February, 1971 to a less confusing weekly publication schedule. A *Drexel Hill Leader* was also published in the same general time range as the *Havertown Leader*. The *West Chester Pike Leader* (see above) was likely part, if not the origin, of this “Leader” family of weekly newspapers. There apparently was a *Delaware County Leader* at some point in time. In many years a shared second section entitled “Ad-Vantage” was used in common by various local “Leader” newspapers; it contained general stories, features and advertising. The Haverford Township Historical Society holds most issues of the *Havertown Leader* in the 1970 through mid-1983 range.

Haverford Press (Aug. 1985-Jan. 2009)

The “Press” family of local weekly newspapers in Delaware County started out as the *Springfield Press*, which began in 1932. Alice Russell served as Editor by 1936, James T. Crowe in 1937 to 1944 and Reese J. Crowe in 1946 to at least 1952, during which span of time the paper was issued on Fridays. On September 15, 1982, Richard L. Crowe and Reese Crowe (two grandchildren of the founder), along with Al Webb and William Lawrence Sr. added the *County Press*, as Crowe Printers & Publishers. This paper originally served Marple and Newtown townships in Delaware County, but over the years expanded its territory to include Upper Providence Township, Nether Providence Township, the Borough of Media, Middletown Township, Edgmont Township and Haverford Township. In 1983 the company merged with the “Leader” family of local weeklies, enabling it to expand by transitioning “Leader” area readers to “Press” publications. A separate *Haverford Press* debuted on August 28, 1985, replacing the *Havertown Leader*. It was followed by the *Drexel Hill Press* on January 18, 1989, the *Garnet Valley Press* in 1992, the *Aston Press* and the *Thornbury Press* in 1995, the *Brookhaven Press* in 1997, and the *Media Press* in 2000. Subsequent to their formation, the Aston and Brookhaven newspapers were consolidated into the *Hometown Press*, while the *Thornbury Press* was folded into the *Garnet Valley Press*. These various papers shared a common second section, mainly general features and advertising, entitled the “Press Focus,” along with other occasional special sections.

This family of publications was sold in October, 2002 to the Journal Register Company (JRC), based in Yardley, Bucks County, Pennsylvania. This started a trend of being a part of increasingly larger syndications of mainly small city and local newspapers, both daily and weekly. The Journal Register Company’s geographic range grew to cover the northeastern U.S. JRC had gone public in 1997 as an attempt to revive Ingersoll Publications, a similar conglomerate that had collapsed under a heavy debt load in 1990. Ingersoll’s downfall, under Ralph Ingersoll II, has been characterized by Allen D. Mutter, a longtime journalist, as “overpaying for newspapers and financing them with junk bonds.” Beyond that, their core business strategy, to counter falling circulation and advertising sales, was to economically consolidate sales, printing and other functions, while at the same time slashing staffing levels to the bare bones. The chief executive of JRC until 2007 was Robert Jelenic, who had been a protégé of Ralph Ingersoll. JRC continued to buy local newspapers and consolidated them into six geographic clusters, including the Greater Philadelphia Cluster. JRC had grown to include 22 daily and 300 non-daily newspapers, with about 3,500 employees, and was listed on the New York Stock Exchange. Its purchase of the Detroit-region 21st Century Newspapers group in 2004 proved to be too expensive. Despite high overall earnings percentages from successive one-time savings, the company’s debt load drove it into bankruptcy in 2008. The last issue of the *Haverford Township Press* apparently rolled off the presses in January, 2009.

After July, 2011 the Journal Register Company was owned by Alden Global Capital, a hedge fund that specialized in distressed companies. Under a new chief executive, John Paton, JRC adopted a “digital first, print last” business strategy to address its internal problems and the additional threat posed to print media by the internet. Paton also became CEO of MediaNews Group headquartered in Denver, Colorado, which like JRC had Alden Global Capital as a major investor. He ran both companies under the name Digital First Media. His innovation attempts raised revenues but proved to be insufficient, and JRC again went into bankruptcy a second time in 2012. Digital First Media merged its two newspaper groups in 2013. Based in New York City, it claimed “more than 800 multi-platform products across 18 states.” Its holdings by this time included the weekly *News of Delaware County* (formerly the Upper Darby News) and the Primos-based *Delaware County Daily Times* (formerly the *Chester Times* 1882-1959 and now a 21st Century Media property), along with the neighboring Main Line Media News group in Lower Merion, Montgomery County. In 2013 the Journal Register Company was sold to 21st CMH Acquisition

Company, “an affiliate of funds managed by Alden Global Capital.” Through all of the turmoil and corporate shell games, the *Delaware County Daily Times* and *News of Delaware County* survive today (2018), with an online internet presence. The “Delaware County News Network” family includes, in addition to the *News of Delaware County*, the *Springfield Press*, *County Press*, *Garnet Valley Press*, *Media Town Talk* and *Ridley Town Talk*.

The Haverford Township Historical Society newspaper collection includes all issues of the *Haverford Press* from mid-1985 through 2006, plus all but one issue in 2008.

The information below on Haverford Township newspapers is excerpted from Pennsylvania Newspapers – A Bibliography and Union List; Ruth Salisbury, Editor; Pennsylvania Library Association; Pittsburgh; 1969 (LoC #68-37842). This is a unified summary compilation of newspapers known to have been published in Pennsylvania, and what libraries and archives (if any) held issues of them. I have re-ordered the listings from “town” order to chronological order. I believe that the separate listings and implied relocations of the *Haverford Township News* to different “towns” are simply caused by “post office confusion.” Haverford Township, including Brookline, has been served during different periods by the “Upper Darby” post office, the “Llanerch” post office and the “Havertown” post office.

<u>Newspaper</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Years</u>
<i>Star and Guide</i>	Llanerch (page 68)	Weekly	1905-1911?
<i>Haverford Township News</i>	Upper Darby (page 164)	Weekly	1927-1933?
	Brookline (page 13)	Weekly	1928-?
	Haverford (page 49)	Weekly	1928-1932?
	Llanerch (page 68)	Weekly	1932-1948?
	(has note “Moved to Ardmore,” but no Ardmore listing looks relevant)		
	Havertown (page 49)	Weekly	1952? to “date”

(The Pennsylvania State Library in Harrisburg is shown holding issues from 1956-1957.)

(The Free Library of Philadelphia is shown holding issues from Feb. 7, 1952 to date. No longer there.)

[Notes: The book contains no “town” listings for “Eagle” or “Manoa.” The book’s 1969 publication date pre-dates the *Havertown Leader* and the *Haverford Press*.]

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