

THE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT

OF PROSPECT PARK

By

Edith Cagnon

THE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT
OF PROSPECT PARK

History books often overlook the most interesting stories of the past. It is a fact that the background of a small town is often more interesting and more informative of the past than many of the stories of large cities which we have read so many times.

Prospect Park is a town of average size, and in many respects it is just like any other urban community. The area is three quarters of a square mile, and the present population is approximately 6,400¹. The town is located in the southeastern section of Pennsylvania and is a suburb of Philadelphia. It is interesting to note that within one and one-half miles of the present location of Prospect Park, Pennsylvania history began. However, there were inhabitants in the area many years before the settlers arrived.

Long before the discovery of America, Indians wandered into the East and made their homes. The Unami Indians were located in the Delaware River Valley from the Lehigh River to the present location of

¹ recent estimates by the Delaware County Planning Commission

Newcastle, Delaware. The Iroquois Indians were the next to come into the area. This tribe later permitted the Shaunee Indians, a wandering tribe from Kentucky and North Carolina, to enter the area of the Delaware River. They settled along the flats below what is now Philadelphia.

Little is known of the ancient Indian settlements, and their exact locations are vague. However, remains of their civilizations have been found in various parts of Delaware Valley.

Prospect Park is located in the Piedmont area. This area is geographically the oldest part of Pennsylvania, being composed chiefly of rocks that became dry land at the beginning of the Paleozoic Era, millions of years ago. The area was originally part of a chain of mountains, but during the geological ages it was worn down by running water. The entire region is noted for its high humidity, although temperatures over one-hundred degrees are uncommon. The winters have always been relatively light, and light snowfalls are frequent.

On a site bounded by Darby Creek, Bow Creek, and the Delaware River; the settlement of Pennsylvania began. Johann Printz, a Swedish soldier, landed with a group of Swedes on what is known today as Tinicum Island. He chose the site, then known as Tennakonck, because he wanted a place which would give him strategic command of the river. A fort

which was called Gottenburg was built on the island. It was made of hemlock logs, and there were four brass cannons which covered the river and helped to protect the colony from an attack.

The colony which the little group established in 1643 was the first such colony in Pennsylvania. Known as the first white farmers, the Swedes had livestock and poultry. They also had orchards and raised wheat and maize. Families first built their homes of logs, but later many of the buildings were rebuilt with brick. Civilization was very high, and ship-building was first started in the colony in 1647.

The standard of living in the Swedish colony improved constantly. The first court of Pennsylvania was established there, and a short time later, the first church and the first school of Pennsylvania were built in the colony.

After ten years as Governor, Printz left to return to his native Sweden. He left the affairs of the colony in the hands of his son-in-law, and in 1655, the Dutch traveled up the Delaware and seized the settlement. During this period, the entire area became a victim of the rivalries between the Dutch and the English. In 1664, the Dutch garrison surrendered to the English.

In 1673, the Dutch recaptured the community of Chester, and for a while it looked as though they would be able to hold off the English, but within a few months, the English were in complete control once again.

William Penn arrived from England in 1682, and it is said that he landed in Chester. A period of growth took place, and the city of Philadelphia assumed the major importance from this period on, and the surrounding area was largely overshadowed by the proximity of the city.

In 1700, the year before Chester was chartered a borough by William Penn, the inhabitants petitioned that a road to be called the Queen's Road should be laid as direct as possible from Darby to the bridge over Chester Creek. This road is the same one which is called Chester Pike at the present time, and it cuts through Prospect Park.

The Queen's Road was of major importance in that it linked Chester and Philadelphia by 1706. Chester had been the largest and most important town in Pennsylvania until Philadelphia took over in 1683, and a road between the two areas was necessary. In 1756, the first line of stage coaches and wagons traveled between Philadelphia and Baltimore by way of the Queen's Road, which had been extended as far as Maryland.

During the Revolutionary War, on the night following the Battle of

Brandywine, the American Army retreated to Chester, and the next day to Philadelphia. While the British Army occupied Philadelphia in the winter of 1777-78, Delaware County was often overrun by small scouting parties of American soldiers sent out to destroy, forage, or cut off supplies from the enemy, and to annoy the British shipping in the Delaware River. It was during this period that John Morton, a resident of early Prospect Park, became prominent.

Settled for the most part by the English, the Southeastern counties of Pennsylvania² were highly influenced by English culture. Even today there are many traces of this influence in the area.

Today, Delaware County has some of the most beautiful rural countryside and suburban communities in America, with many famous landmarks of historical importance. The name of the county was derived from the Delaware River, which adjoins it on the East. The land area is one hundred eighty-five square miles, and it is bounded by Philadelphia County on the North; Montgomery and Chester Counties on the West; the state of Delaware on the South; and the Delaware River on the East. Transportation to and from the area is plentiful.

²The Southeastern counties included Philadelphia, Chester (which originally included Delaware County until 1789), and Bucks Counties.

Many bus lines and railroad trains make travel easy and convenient.

Furthermore, there are ocean and coastal transportation facilities, and the leading commercial airlines make frequent stops each day at the huge Philadelphia International Airport.

The earliest history of Prospect Park goes back to 1654. In that year, a log house was built along Darby Creek. The owner, great-grandfather of John Morton, had been one of the early Swedish settlers in the area of Tinicum. John Morton, a member of the Continental Congress and a signer of the Declaration of Independence, was born in this same house in 1724. The Morton homestead is now a memorial park, and the building has been restored.

The King's and Queen's Highway, later known as the Great Southern Road and now called Chester Pike, cut directly through Prospect Park. It crossed the township,³ coming from Darby in the North and leading to Chester and other points in the South. From the days of William Penn until railroad trains became generally accepted for travel, American and Foreign dignitaries used the Great Southern Road on journeys to and from the National Capital and the various cities of the North and East. Because of the road, General Washington and many other American leaders were well known figures in the township.

³Prospect Park was part of Ridley Township until 1894

By 1835, the wheels of progress were beginning to turn rapidly. Railroads were coming into use, and by 1837, there were three different railroad companies which were of some service to this area. One line traveled between Baltimore and the Susquehanna River. Another route ran between the Susquehanna River and the Maryland-Delaware State Line, through Wilmington, and on to the Maryland State Line. There was also daily service between Baltimore and Wilmington, and the passengers were ferried across the Susquehanna River to make steamer connections in Wilmington if they wished to travel as far as Philadelphia.

In 1860, the Philadelphia, Wilmington and Baltimore Railroad was laid through the immediate area to facilitate travel and meet the needs of the Civil War.⁴ This railroad went into the city of Philadelphia when a viaduct was built over the Schuylkill River a few years later.

Several years after the Civil War, a section of the railroad was realigned. This action brought the tracks directly through Prospect Park. A deed⁵ dated May 5, 1873, bears the signature of Mr. James L. Moore. Mr. Moore gave a strip of land between the station in Norwood and the proposed building in Prospect Park, to the railroad. However, an agreement was made that the station in Prospect Park would always be called

⁴1945 edition of the Encyclopedia Americana; Volume 21, page 537

Moore Station.

When completed, the station was a two story frame building. The station agent lived on the second floor, while the waiting room was located on the first floor and was very large and comfortable for the people of that day.

A number of local trains made their terminus in Prospect Park because the turnout and engine houses were also erected there. The business of the railroad was large, and there were four tracks that carried trains to and from the town. The fact that local trains made their terminus at Moore Station was an important factor in the growth of Prospect Park. In later years the terminus was moved away, but local trains, drawn by steam power, were on a commuter schedule.

During the early years of the railroad, the crossing at Lincoln Avenue had been a street crossing. In 1900, the railroad company, which had recently been renamed as the Pennsylvania Railroad Company, had this crossing changed to an underpass because of the frequent accidents that had occurred at this point.

During the 1920's, the Pennsylvania Railroad installed electrification equipment, and all trains on the line were changed from steam to electric motive power. Since then, numerous improvements have been made, and in

addition to its being a direct line to the south, the railroad still provides frequent commuter service between Philadelphia and Wilmington.

Street railway service began in the community in 1911. Tracks were laid along Lincoln Avenue from the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad to the Delaware River in Essington. Known as Moore's Line, the service was an important one for many of the workers at the newly built Westinghouse plant in Lester.⁶ After automobiles came into general use, the line became equipped with a one car trolley called the Dinky, or Annie Moore. Because of other means of transportation, there were very few passengers for the trolley by 1930. A few years later, the tracks were removed, and the line was replaced by a bus that made infrequent trips along the same route. There is still some bus service along Lincoln Avenue, but the need is slight.

The Great Southern Road, now known as Chester Pike, was a toll road until the early 1920's. Trolley cars ran on double tracks between the divided concrete highway, which had been laid shortly after the toll was stopped. By 1935, the trolley tracks were eliminated, and the center area was paved to make a six lane highway. The public service trolley

⁶Both Essington and Lester are located in the area known as Tinicum.

was replaced by frequent bus service between Darby and Chester. This service still continues regularly along the same route.

During 1929, Lincoln Avenue was paved with concrete. When the trolley tracks were removed several years later, the center section was paved to complete a first class highway. By 1940, there were excellent roads in four directions of the compass for the convenience of the people of the borough.

Early homes in Prospect Park were located, for the most part, along the Great Southern Road. The first concentration of housing took place below this road to Darby Creed, and West of Lincoln Avenue. In this area was located the mansion of Sketchley Morton, son of the signer of the Declaration of Independence. By 1859, there were one hundred twenty-four homes built in Prospect Park.⁷

Prospect Park was laid out in 1875. It was the property of John Cochran, who purchased the land from an estate, and the firm of John Chadwick and Son. It laid between the Great Southern Road and the railroad tracks. The grounds were surveyed, and streets and avenues laid out. A large park was planned for the center, and six hundred lots were carefully marked off. A building association was organized, and many people

⁷ according to the Sixteenth Census of the United States

eagerly bought homes, which they used as summer homes.

In addition to the area just mentioned, there was another large tract of land that laid between Pennsylvania Avenue and what is now Sixteenth Avenue. This land was purchased in the early 1870's by Mr. James L. Moore.

The building boom during the early 1900's was due largely to the efforts of Mr. Frederick Faber. Many people used their suburban homes as summer homes only, moving into Philadelphia for the winter months. With the development of industry just before and during World War I, the town grew rapidly and continued growing into the 1920's when industries expanded.

There was a marked decrease of building during the 1930's, the depression being the main reason. There was also the problem of physical limitations of the borough. Also, many people moved into areas further away from the congestion caused by industries. There was some conversion of homes into apartments and a few homes were built--but nothing like it had been before.

With the start of defense work, the demand for homes and apartments was very high in the area. Many apartments were made from older private homes during the period of defense and war. Following World II, there

There is no possibility for extension of the limits of Prospect Park, because it is bounded by Darby Creek on one side, by Norwood and Ridley Park boroughs on two other sides, and by Ridley Township on the fourth side. Thus, the growth of Prospect Park is limited, except for the possibility of more apartments which may be constructed in some of the large old homes in the future.

The Borough of Prospect Park was incorporated on May 7th, 1894.

During the early years of the borough, a sewer system was installed for the convenience of the residents. Lighting facilities were by means of acetylene systems and coal oil in the early days. Gas mains were later laid along Lincoln Avenue, and home lighting was greatly improved by this. Electricity came into use in the early 1900's, but only as an auxilliary to gas. People did not get continuous use of electric service in the early years of it's use. Private water supplies gave way to the use of Springfield water facilities when pipes were laid during the 1890's.

Early sidewalks in Propsect Park were constructed of wood, and some cinder paths were also used. Later, a standard was set for all sidewalks.

Business, both private and industrial, has done much for the growth and development of Prospect Park.

The first industry to employ a number of workers from Prospect Park was the Robert Craig Company. A large branch of the company has been located in the town since 1910.

The next business in Prospect Park was the Drane Steel Company. The product of this company was large forging ingots which were used in ship propellers and shafts. While at it's peak, the production capacity was about 3,500 tons a month, and employment was provided for approximately one hundred people. The market dropped after World War I, and the plant finally closed in 1922. Several years later, the building was torn down and the ground was sold.

During the early 1920's, a plant for manufacturing automobiles, was built on Thirteenth Avenue. The DuPont Company, as it was known, was a prosperous business for a few years, but competition became too great, and the plant was forced to close.

The Alloy Metal Wire Company purchased the DuPont building when it moved to Prospect Park in the mid 1920's. During it's early years, the new industry provided work for about twenty-five people. However, business was good and continued to prosper until 1929. Surviving the depression, the industry underwent a change of management in 1935. At this time, new buildings were constructed, and employment increased. Still in operation

today, Alloy Metal Wire Company provides employment for a number of Prospect Park residents.

Prospect Park was chosen as the location of the industries previously mentioned, because of the convenient transportation facilities provided by the railroads and the Delaware River. The location is also close to sources of supply, being a suburb of Philadelphia and near other large cities such as Chester and Wilmington.

Two important outside industries should also be mentioned because of their impact on the community. They are the Baldwin Locomotive Works, and Westinghouse Electric Corporation.

Baldwin Locomotive Works is located in Eddystone, which is approximately three miles from Prospect Park. First operations started in 1907, and business has prospered since that time.

Westinghouse Electric Corporation began operations in Lester in 1918. A branch was built at this location because of expanding business and a desire to be near river transportation. Even though it was intended as a peace-time project, the plant was rushed to completion due to World War I. Many families came from Pittsburgh and bought homes in Prospect Park because of the adequate public transportation to and from the plant. The trolley service fulfilled the requirements of the workers in the days

before the common use of automobiles. Westinghouse had more to do with the growth of Prospect Park than any other incident in the history of the borough, and for many years it was known as "A Westinghouse Community."

Some of the other industries which are convenient to residents of Prospect Park include numerous oil refineries, General Steel Casting Corporation, Vertol Aircraft Corporation, Scott Paper Company, Lester Piano Works, and many others located in Philadelphia and neighboring areas.

Important to every community is it's fire protection. Following a very serious fire in the borough in 1894, the citizens of Prospect Park realized that a fire company was necessary to the safety of the town, and too much time was lost in calling on one of the eight companies in Delaware County. A group of residents met one evening in 1894. This meeting led to the formation of a volunteer fire company known as Prospect Fire Company Number 1.

The fire chief of the new company was authorized to go to Danville, Pennsylvania, and purchase a four-wheel hose carriage known as the "White Turtle." The price was \$135.00. A hose was purchased, and Prospect Park had it's first fire company. When the charter was requested in 1896, the name was changed to Prospect Park Fire Company Number 1.

In 1900, another hose wagon was purchased. This could be drawn by hand or pulled by horses, and added to the facilities of the fire-fighting unit and the safety of buildings in the borough.

The Ladies' Auxiliary was formed in the early days of the Fire Company and it aided the financial success of the company. Famous were it's annual Washington Birthday suppers, which were held in the Masonic Hall.

The first fire house was a temporary one and was located on Lincoln Avenue, near the railroad. The building remained the home of the fire company until the present building was built at Tenth and Lincoln Avenue in 1908. The dedication date was one to remember. The new building was officially dedicated, and a parade, featuring every fire company in Delaware County, was held. A dance was held in Masonic Hall, and special entertainment in the new auditorium climaxed the evening.

Prospect Park Fire Company Number 1 was one of the first companies in Delaware County to acquire motorized fire-fighting apparatus. A contract was made with Garford Company of Philadelphia in 1917, for a pumper and hose truck that would replace the awkward hand-drawn hose wagon and hose reel. In 1928, once again new apparatus was purchased to take care of the town. Today, the fire company has a hook-and-ladder, a modern

truck, and a sound truck. These are up-to-date and offer full fire protection to the community.

The protection of personal and business funds has been no problem for the residents and business people of Prospect Park. The first bank in the community was founded as a community service by a group of citizens who, looking into the future, saw a great expansion of both business and population in Delaware County. Opened for business in 1921, the first bank was known as Interboro Bank. The name was later changed to The Interboro Bank and Trust Company. Within recent years this bank, located at Chester Pike and Amosland Road, has combined with the Broad Street Trust Company as one of its Delaware County branches.

Another bank opened its doors in Prospect Park in 1928. For a number of years it was known as the Prospect Park State Bank. This building, located at 1006 Lincoln Avenue, has also become a branch office of the Broad Street Trust Company.

Borough Council organizes once every two years. Its members, having terms of four years, are elected by popular vote. The president, elected by members of Council, has several duties. He must keep order during debate, decide questions of order, and cast a vote in the event of a tie. Other officers, such as the Treasurer and Solicitor, are appointed by the

Several committees are provided for by the Borough Council. The President not only designates the committees on which the members are to serve, but he also selects a chairman for each group. Each of the committees is responsible for the legislation and management of a particular general subject to which it is assigned. These subjects might concern fire protection, police protection, parks and recreation, or any other of the numerous topics of concern to residents of the community.

The Borough Council exercises the powers delegated to it by the Commonwealth through the Borough Code, enacted in 1927, and through various other laws affecting municipalities. When performing its various duties, Council becomes both administrative and legislative. As an administrator, Council appoints various officers and fixes their salaries. It also guides and investigates their work. As a legislator, Council has the power to levy taxes, appropriate money, and make policies on matters which affect the community.

A greater part of the work of Council is accomplished with the passage of ordinances and resolutions. Administrative measures are enacted by resolution. Matters which would regulate the citizens are decreed by ordinance. Any member of Council may introduce an ordinance or a resolution to his fellow members. It is then passed on to an

appropriate committee for study and possible public hearing. After careful consideration, the results are handed to Council for action.

In connection with the Borough Council, it is fitting to mention briefly some of the various officials who give their services for the good of their fellow citizens.

The Burgess is elected by the voters for a term of four years. His duties and powers may be executive, legislative, judicial, or administrative. In spite of their variety, these powers are very narrowly restricted.

The Secretary of Prospect Park is a very important member of Council. He is a part-time employee appointed by Council to a term of two years. Council also has the power to remove him from office or reappoint him at any time. The Secretary is responsible for the handling of correspondence, receipt and handling of complaints, publication of legal notices, issuance of permits and licenses, and purchase of supplies and equipment.

The Treasurer is also a part-time official. He is appointed by Council to a term of two years, and his duties concern the receipt, custody, and disbursement of public funds. The Treasurer, Secretary, and President must sign all checks which are issued by any of the various

committees or Council.

The Solicitor is responsible for the direction and control of all matters of law. His duties include the prosecution of all legal actions against the borough or any of its officers. He is appointed by Council and serves for a term of four years.

Prospect Park has two Justices of Peace. They are elected by the voters and serve for terms of six years. They may hold court and summon juries for minor crimes and civil suits involving three hundred dollars or less. In addition, they have the power to inquire into any criminal offense, to receive bail, and to commit an accused person. In certain minor violations, they are given summary jurisdiction. The justices' pay is fixed by state laws and vary according to the action taken by them in each case.

The Constable is elected by the people for a term of four years. He is responsible for posting election notices, enforcing laws, and acting as a court officer for the Justices of the Peace.

Also Council-appointed is the Borough Manager. His duties are related solely to the financial activities of the community. He must present to Council monthly reports on the financial affairs of the borough and once a year submit a tentative budget to them.

The Tax Collector is elected by the voters for a term of four years. In addition to the collection of borough, school, and county taxes levied on real estate and occupations, he must prepare a monthly tax return. On this, he must indicate the amount of taxes collected during the month, amount of uncollected taxes remaining on duplicate, and the names of taxable persons from whom the taxes were collected. The Tax Collector receives a commission which does not exceed five per cent of the taxes collected on real estate. This commission is fixed by a resolution of Council at the beginning of his term.

The Assessor is also an elected official whose term lasts for four years. His duty is to evaluate property for the purpose of taxation. Every three years he must make a complete assessment for the borough. He also attaches values to occupations for the same purpose.

Three Auditors serve for terms of six years. They are given the responsibility of auditing and settling the accounts of the Secretary, Treasurer, Tax Collector and any other officials or committees who receive or expend any of the borough funds. From the yearly audit, the Secretary furnishes a report to the State Department of Internal Affairs at Harrisburg and to the Clerk of Courts of Delaware County. The Auditors are elected in a special election by the officials.

Street lighting in Prospect Park is now furnished through contract with the Philadelphia Electric Company and is paid for by borough taxation.

The sewage system in Prospect Park is a common type today. It is known as a separate system because rain water and domestic sewage are carried in pipe systems independent of each other. Many years ago, a number of properties in the town had their own rain-water conductors connected to the sanitary sewage system. Whenever there was a severe storm, water overflowed and flooded the general area along Lincoln Avenue. The area was low, and the swamps between Prospect Park and Tinicum added to the hazardous condition of the main highway. The residents recognized the dangerous situation, and a number of years ago, storm sewers were constructed to relieve the flooding and provide for more sanitary conditions throughout the town.

The incorporation of Prospect Park as a borough was advantageous to the residents in many ways. It brought with it the town's first police force, to protect the citizens from any harm which might come to them in the ever changing area. Its headquarters located in the Borough Hall, the force has increased steadily as the population and need for more protection has grown, and now the force is ten members strong.

Included in the force are four full-time and four part-time men, plus two crossing guards. The guards are on duty at various time during the day to protect young children on their way to and from school. It is needless to say that this service is a comfort to the minds of parents whose small children must cross the main highways.

The selection of police personnel is subject to the requirements stated in the Police Civil Service Law of 1941. The Police Commission provides a list of those men who have been certified as police, and from this list, Council chooses the police force. Just as Council has the power to appoint force members, it also has the power to discharge any member who does not fulfill his obligations to the force or the citizens of the community.

The responsibilities of the police are many. Generally speaking, they include: the prevention and repression of crime, the capture and arrest of offenders, the recovery of property, the control of traffic, the enforcement of motor vehicle laws, building inspection, and fire fighting. They may arrest on sight without a warrant and hold for hearing anyone who is guilty of a breach of peace, vagrancy, or unlawful conduct.

Prospect Park Police Department is a member of the Sharon Hill

Police Radio Network. This network is a means by which the many member departments may keep in constant touch with patrolmen in radio cars, who are always patrolling their designated areas and carrying out their duties.

The residents of Prospect Park are privileged in that they have the use of several parks and recreational areas within the Borough limits.

Mr. Cochran, mentioned previously as one of the original land owners in the area, founded a park in the central part of his settlement.

It is still located between Ninth and Tenth Avenues and East and West Park Squares. The park has always been a public area, and has been the scene of many outdoor festivities throughout the years. During the early years of the Borough, a band pavillion was built in the center of the park, and for many years, weekly band concerts were held. Special programs are still held there occasionally.

The large area between Thirteenth and Fifteenth Avenues on the Ridley Park side of the Borough, is known as Lake Park. There is playground equipment there for children, and cooking facilities are available for family or group outings. There is a large open area which lies beside a lake. The lake was once a very popular place for ice-skating and fishing, but in recent years the erosion of the soil around it has

caused it to become dry. Recent steps have been taken to restore the lake and it will once again be stocked for summer fishing.

The Lake Park is especially popular during July Fourth celebrations. Following the parade along Lincoln Avenue, races and pony rides are held in the park. A band concert is held there in the evening, and this is followed by fireworks that draw an ever increasing attendance.

The Athletic Field, also known as Municipal Stadium, is located within the area bounded by Second, Fourth, Lafayette, and Madison Avenues. It was purchased by the Borough in 1936. Prospect Park High School was given exclusive occupancy during its regularly scheduled athletic games, as well as during practice sessions. The field is truly a contributing factor to the history of Prospect Park High School. It is now used by Interboro Junior High School for its athletic games and practice sessions. Interboro Senior High School used the field during the 1958 football season because the new high school field was not completed. It is possible that they will use it again during the 1959 season. It can easily be said that many of Delaware Valley's best and most memorable football games were played at Municipal Stadium.

Prospect Park contributed to the original purchase of the land chosen as a shrine to John Morton, signer of the Declaration of Independence.

His birthplace, which was restored at the time of its purchase, provides the main object of interest in this park, which is located along Darby Creek.

Each summer, instructors are employed for the playgrounds in the community, and crafts are taught in the elementary school on Pennsylvania Avenue.

Boating has become quite popular in recent years. Darby Creek, which adjoins Prospect Park, provides an outlet for the many enthusiasts in the Borough.

Also available for entertainment in the community is the Manor Theater. It is located on Chester Pike near Washington Avenue, and provides up-to-date movies each day of the week.

Postal service began in Prospect Park in 1859. At that time a little post office, known as Ridleyville, drew the attention of residents of the county, as well as residents of the borough. Only two years after it had been established, the little post office was abandoned. For a number of years there was no further attempt made to continue the service of the Post Office Department in the community, and residents had to rely on another town for their mail service.

During the fall of 1878, Ridleyville Post Office was again opened.

The attempt to reorganize the postal service proved futile, and four years later the office was again abandoned. Service, however, was not completely discontinued, because a short time later, Mr. James L. Moore, one of the first land-owners in the area, set up the Moore's Post Office in his feed and lumber store, which was opposite the Moore Railroad Station. He was the postmaster there for about a year and a half, and he was succeeded by the ticket agent for the railroad. The agent moved the post office into the railroad station where it existed for several years.

After 1890, the post office had several homes. For three years it was located in a grocery store and the next four in a meat market. 1897 found it back in the grocery store, and the grocer reassumed control of the mail.

Following the appointment of a new Postmaster in 1913, the office was moved to a building, which had formerly been occupied by a drug store, on the corner of Eleventh and Lincoln Avenues. This building became the permanent home of the Post Office, and alterations were made so that it would properly accommodate its new occupant.

On February 1, 1932, the official change of name took place.

Moore's Post Office became a thing of the past, and the official name became Prospect Park Post Office.

A few years ago, a new Post Office building was erected on Eleventh Avenue just below Lincoln Avenue. It is modern and spacious and adequately serves the needs of the Borough residents.

Prospect Park also has within its limits a public library. Since 1923, when it was established, the library has been an important element in the education of the residents of the community. The building is located in front of the Borough Hall, directly across Maryland Avenue from the railroad station. The present building was constructed in 1926 by Council and the popular section for children was added nine years later.

The Prospect Park Free Library Association annually elects seven members from its body to serve actively on the Library Board. Supervision of the library is the main responsibility of the appointed librarian. She is assisted by volunteers who have proven their interest in library work.

Several years ago, a memorial was placed at the library. The Prospect Park Memorial honors the memory of those who made the supreme sacrifice in World War II. The memorial plaque was presented to the

library by the John Wesley Cross Post Number 507, American Legion, on May 30, 1949.

Churches of four major Protestant denominations are located in Prospect Park. They are Baptist, Episcopal, Methodist and Presbyterian. The background of each is interesting and important to the history of the Borough.

Prospect Hill Baptist Church is located on Lincoln Avenue, a little north of Chester Pike. The Old Ridley Baptist Meeting House, as it was first known, was erected in 1832 by a small group of Baptists, on land which was given to them for the purpose of a Church.

The original building was thirty by forty feet in size and was made of rough stone. In later years it was enlarged and the outer walls were rough casted. During 1842, the Church was incorporated under a new name, and for several years it was known as The First Particular Baptist Church of the Township of Ridley.

About the year 1872, it was decided to build a new Church near the old site, and ground was prepared for this purpose; but it was afterwards determined, for various reasons, to change the location to Ridley Park, one mile from the old site, and in 1874, a beautiful building was built and dedicated there.

Sunday School was continued in the old building on Lincoln Avenue, and in 1887, a number of the members of the original congregation returned and organized the Prospect Hill Baptist Church.

The continued growth of membership demanded a larger structure. The Prospect Cemetery Company gave the Church a piece of ground of twenty-eight feet frontage adjoining the Church property. This enabled the Church to erect a larger and more suitable building, and the House of Worship, in use today, was built in 1893, of gray stone, and included a seventy-two foot tower to which a bell was added in 1903.

In 1956, a large building addition was completed, providing advanced Sunday School facilities, a modern kitchen and a very useful fellowship hall.

The Second Baptist Church, a quaint little frame building, is located on Lincoln Avenue near the John Morton homestead. Here, services are held for the Negro congregation.

Saint James Episcopal Church, located at Eleventh and Lincoln Avenues, was organized as a mission in 1906. A building was erected, and the cornerstone laid in 1909. The Church was popular in the community, and grew so rapidly that it was enlarged and a rectory built in 1929.

The Church, cleared of debt, was admitted into union with the Convention of the Diocese of Pennsylvania in 1944.

The present Prospect Methodist Church began with Prayer meetings which were held in the Norwood School House. In March of 1878, a meeting was held concerning the organization of the group as a Church.

A committee was appointed to make plans for erecting a Church at Ninth and Lincoln Avenues. The congregation decided that it could not afford a building that would cost more than four thousand dollars, and when the lowest bids were higher than the sum allotted, the church members erected their building themselves.

A total of twenty-five dollars was paid for the roof and stone walls of the old school-house that stood on the corner of Thirteenth and Lincoln Avenues. The stones from the walls were used as the foundation of the Church, and the cornerstone was laid in October of 1878. The original sanctuary is still in use, although several additions have been made to the building. These additions were made in 1882, 1918, and 1927.

The Church has just completed a huge expansion program. This was necessary due to the steady growth of the Prospect Church. The new educational building adjoins the original structure, and consists of

class rooms for the Sunday School, offices, a new kitchen and a Fellowship Hall with a seating capacity of two hundred. It is interesting to note that within a period of two years, funds were raised for the project, and the building was erected and consecrated.

The first services of the Presbyterian Church were held in Galloway Hall, which was located at Tenth and Lincoln Avenues, in 1889. A meeting was held in October of the same year to consider the organization of a Presbyterian Church in Prospect Park.

A special meeting was held to select a name for the Church, and Bethany and Moores were suggested. The name Bethany was chosen, but was later changed to Olivet, because a Church of the chosen name already existed in the Presbytery. On March 7, 1899, a charter was adopted, and the first pastor was selected.

In 1905, the original church building was erected at Tenth and Washington Avenues, but the manse was not constructed until 1926.

Groundbreaking ceremonies for a new church building took place in March 1927. While the congregation was without a sanctuary, they used the auditorium of the Washington School, which was later known as Prospect Park High School. Since the dedication in 1928, the congregation has increased, and the Sunday School and other organizations have grown

with the changing times.

There are only Protestant Churches in the Borough, but it is well to mention that there are Catholic Churches within walking distance. These are located in the neighboring boroughs of Norwood and Ridely Park.

Numerous Scout troops flourish better in Prospect Park. They are sponsored by organizations of the various churches, and offer recreation, as well as practical education to the boys and girls of the community.

Perhaps the most interesting section in the history of Prospect Park lies within the schools.

In the very early days, it is said that there was a one story school on the corner of Thirteenth and Lincoln Avenues. It was a little country school with only a couple of rooms in which to hold classes of several grade levels. When no longer used, the students attended the Norwood School until a new school could be constructed in Prospect Park. As mentioned previously, the roof and walls of this old school were used in the construction of the Methodist Church.

The Lincoln Avenue School opened its doors for the first time in 1888. For many years, until the approximate period of World War I, the school handled all grades from first to twelfth inclusive. In 1924, a new building, known as the Washington School, was constructed in order

to handle the enrollment which had increased tremendously. In spite of the use of two schools, overcrowding forced high school classes to be discontinued, and the students of high school age were sent to neighboring Ridley Park High School for the completion of their secondary education.

Additions were made to the Washington School in 1927 and again in 1930. Following these additions, the high school program was reinaugurated, and the name changed to Prospect Park High School. The first senior class, under the new program, was graduated in 1932.

In 1939, plans were made to build a new elementary school to replace the old Lincoln Avenue school, part of which had been condemned. Fifth and sixth grade classes were being held in the high school, and once again there were overcrowded conditions. Work was begun for a new elementary school on Pennsylvania Avenue, between Ninth and Tenth Avenues but, due to the war, construction was halted, and it was left only partly built for several years. In fact, it was not ready for use until 1949. When classes were moved to the building, the old school was abandoned and sold to the Methodist Church.

Prospect Park High School was accredited by the Pennsylvania State Department of Public Instruction and by the Middle States Association

of College and Secondary Schools. Students who successfully completed academic courses were admitted by certificate to all colleges or universities that admitted high school graduates on recommendation.

The school district was very small. Total average enrollment was approximately 800.

It is interesting to note that in 1943, one hundred fifty-nine graduates on the school district were serving with the armed forces.

April 21, 1955, brought another drastic change to the school system of Prospect Park. This was the date of the jointure which brought Prospect Park and Glen-Nor High Schools together. Interboro Senior High School, as it was to be called, is located in the Glen-Nor High School building, while Interboro Junior High School occupies the former Prospect Park High School building. The jointure, which took effect in July of 1955, united the boroughs of Prospect Park, Norwood and Glenolden in what is now known as the Interboro Joint School System. The jointure includes elementary as well as secondary schools.

A meeting of the citizens of the three boroughs took place in May of 1957, and the joint School Board announced plans for the enlargement of both the junior and senior high schools. In the summer of 1958, ground was broken for the new additions, and the building program moved

forward by leaps and bounds.

Although the change was a difficult step for many of the Prospect Park students to take, it has been a wise one that will extend a wider field of education to the youth of the community.

This concludes the history and development of Prospect Park. It is perhaps just like many other towns in America, but to a small percentage of the world's population, it is special. It is a home town to those who can remember part of its life.

adapted from

The information for this report was gathered from numerous pamphlets and newspaper articles that are in the files of the Prospect Park Library. Much of the information on the churches was taken from manuals which have been distributed from time to time, and also from anniversary programs. Other facts were gathered from recent newspaper articles and interviews with Borough residents who were able to give first hand information on certain incidents which took place in the community at one time or another.

I have tried to cover the following topics insofar as the information available has permitted:

- Area and limits
- Population
- Location
- Early Indians
- Early settlers
- Highways
- Outline (brief) of Delaware County
- Transportation
- Earliest history of Prospect Park
- John Morton as an early resident
- Housing
- Surveyence of the town
- Industries
- Lighting
- Sewage
- Sidewalks
- Fire Company
- Ladies' Auxiliary

II

Banks

Borough Council, officials, and special committees

Incorporation as a Borough

Police department

Parks and recreational areas

Post Office

Library

Memorial

Churches

Scout troops

Schools