

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

Thankful for Pottstown

Aside from my marriage, the best decision I ever made was moving to Pottstown.

In 1971, I got a temporary job at The Mercury sorting sales slips. Shortly thereafter, a reporter was fired, and I was a readily available replacement.

Driving down King Street from Route 100 (I lived in Allentown), I loved looking at the beautiful homes and churches in the neighborhood surrounding the newspaper. I longed to live here, and when the social editor of The Mercury, Esther Gray, died in 1972, my wife and I bought her house from her heirs. Our back yard was, and is, right across the street from the newspaper.

Some of the things I loved best are gone now. Back then, High Street was chock-a-block with stores of all kinds and boasted a thriving farmer's market. The train ran to Philadelphia hourly, seven days a week. Pottstown's 1926 high school building loomed over Chestnut Street across from our house (it was demolished in 1982 for a parking lot).

But most of Pottstown's lovely architecture remains, and there are many great additions, such as the new borough hall and downtown park, the greenway, and the community college. We have 1,500 street

trees we didn't have before. There are still enough stores to fulfill anyone's daily needs, a library, a post office, and plenty of other conveniences.

In 1993 I received a fellowship to study planning. It was more like a paid vacation. I drove all the way to Vancouver, B.C., down the coast to Los Angeles and back through most of the western states. I drove through the South to the tip of Florida. I drove through New England and Canada.

And of all the places I saw, I still liked Pottstown best.

It saddens me to hear all the negativism about this town. I love walking through Pottstown every day and interacting with people face to face — something you can't do from behind the wheel of a car.

One morning last week I saw a girl skateboarding to the middle school. Try doing that at Owen J. Roberts.

Despite the headlines, Pottstown is safe. We have a lot of poor people. It's not a crime to be poor. In fact, I've often found poor people to be more courteous and grateful for what they have than their well-heeled opposites in their three-car McMansions.

Our schools are color blind. Black, white, nobody cares. Pottstown youth receive great preparation for adulthood in our increasingly diverse nation.

Forty-two years and running, I'm thankful to be here.



Commentary by
Tom Hylton



The 1768 Potts Family Burial Ground at 240 Chestnut Street. Pottstown has a rich human and architectural heritage the suburbs can't match.