

# Warrington authors unearth township's eclectic history

Corinne Miller

Warrington Township has seen a lot in its 275-year history from presidential stays to Dick Clark's American Bandstand to a missile base site.

These events and more are depicted in "Warrington," the latest in Arcadia Publishing's Images of America series, authored by Mary Doyle Roth and Kenneth Samen for the Warrington Historical Society. Released Feb. 16, the 128-page book contains more than 200 photographs of the small Central Bucks County community's eclectic history.

For example, page 13 features a homestead that housed a vacationing President Ulysses S. Grant, while he was at West Point, and functioned as part of the Underground Railroad. In 1963, the building became a branch of the Hatboro Federal Savings Bank.

Readers can also learn more about Warrington's past entertainment venues. It was home to the Bucks County Drive-In, which opened in 1951 on Easton Road and closed 48 years later, and the Warrington Skating Rink, which hosted Dick Clark and "American Bandstand" throughout 1958 and 1959, and later closed in the late 1990s.

Arcadia Publishing approached

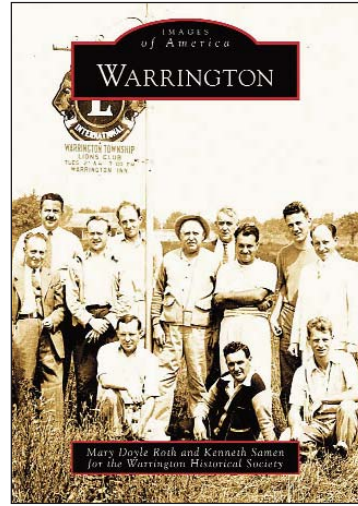
the historical society, consisting of approximately seven members at the time, in 2008 about creating the book. At that point, the organization had just been created the year before, having stemmed from the Warrington Township Historic Commission. The society was created and granted nonprofit status so it could collect donations and received grants. The book, said Roth and Samen, is a fundraiser for the historical society, which now has about 20 members and looking for more.

It took Roth, Samen and the rest of the society approximately a year to track down photographs and piece Warrington's history together using a coherent narrative.

"We had lots of people go through their pictures and give us some really good old pictures," said Roth, who has lived most of her life in the township. "We're very pleased with the outcome of the book."

The historical society was surprised how much history they were able to unearth considering the size of the township.

"Warrington's kind of small," Samen said. "I'm amazed that there were pictures of certain things. For instance, there was a picture of some of the old houses on [Route] 611. We weren't aware that there was still documentation



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"Warrington" is part of Arcadia Publishing's Images of America series.

of these houses.

"Warrington's still reasonably small and it was much, much smaller 50 to 70 years ago," he continued. "It was the fact that there are still so many people that live in the township that have connections to families that were around 50 to 200 years ago."

"Warrington was really an important crossroads," Roth stated. "It was a farming community but the transportation – the (Philadelphia Rapid Transit Company Trol-

## Book signing

Mary Doyle Roth and Kenneth Samen will be on hand to sign copies of "Warrington" 2 to 4 p.m. March 14 at Doylestown Bookshop, 16 S Main St.

ley) line and the roads that have been here for a really long time – brought everything together and made it more than just a little farming community."

One of Roth's favorite pictures in the book is of Warrington's now busy intersection, Bristol and Easton roads, and how it looked in 1909. "[The photograph on page 12] looks totally different from the way that intersection looks today where people are stuck in traffic. In the picture, you can see the trolley tracks. Electric had just been run up [Route] 611. There is one man walking down the road. Today it takes you 10 minutes to get through the intersection."

The intersection is just one of the many changes Warrington has witnessed.

"The majority of the residents that live in the township are only from 10, 15, 20 years ago so a lot of these things that are in the book have been gone, like the Nike

base," noted Samen, referring to the missile site located in the middle of Warrington that protected Philadelphia but has since been transformed into Igoe-Porter-Wellings Memorial Park.

"These are things that if we didn't document it, they're never going to know it," continued Samen, who is a newer resident himself, having moved to the township in 1999.

"It'll give [readers] a good understanding of the way Warrington was. So much of Warrington is new residents who aren't aware that the township is as old as it," said Roth. "Whenever we have posters at Warrington Day, there are always so many people, who are new to the township, who are totally shocked the area's that old because they're seeing the new development and houses. Other than a few noticeable buildings on 611, they don't realize how old the township is."

From its first fire truck (a 1925 Ford Model TT American LaFrance) to its first community pool, "Warrington" shows that despite the township's more modern buildings, there are still relics on display.

"Warrington," which retails for \$21.99, is available at local retailers, online bookstores or at arcadiapublishing.com.