

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

Big changes, and more to come

On Tuesday, we noted the Spanish Flu of 1918-1919 was barely mentioned in the Pottstown High School yearbooks of 1918 and 1919.

Except for a brief closure, apparently in October of 1918, life at school went on normally.

(All Pottstown High School yearbooks from 1907 to 2016 are available on the school district website. Click on the "Our Alumni" tab.)

Some might conclude the old yearbooks show we are overreacting today, but our culture is much different now. Today, the salient facts are

ing, writing and arithmetic.

About one in twelve children aged 10 to 15 were working full-time. Many houses lacked indoor plumbing. Electricity and tele-

phones were in their infancy. Cars were just coming into the mainstream. Radio and television didn't exist.

Only in their advanced age did any of the Class of 1919 experience computers and the internet. America enjoyed tremendous prosperity in the decade after the Class of 1919. Then came the Great Depression of the 1930s and our entry in the Second World War in 1941.

Postwar prosperity and universal car ownership led to the development of suburbs. Over the following decades, the middle class and affluent gradually abandoned Pottstown,

leaving a concentration of poor and minority residents behind.

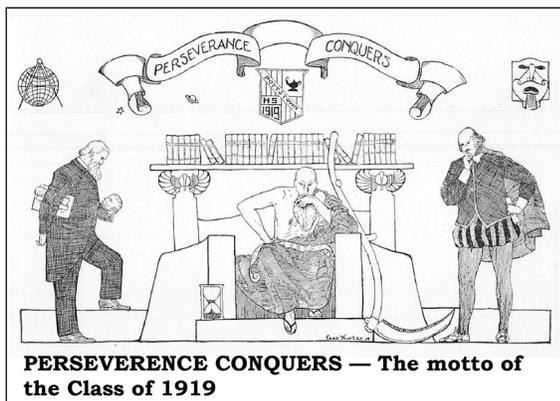
Pottstown's manufacturing industries, the backbone of Pottstown's prosperity in 1919, nearly all closed.

The downtown stores of 1919 were replaced by car-oriented malls in the former countryside.

None of this was imaginable in 1919, just as we cannot imagine today what lies ahead in our lives. Things may get better, but nothing is guaranteed.



Commentary by
Tom Hylton



that many parents and teachers are afraid to return to in-class instruction. Thirty million are unemployed.

Given the incompetence in Washington, it is impossible to say when this crisis will be over.

Just like our students of today, the 68 graduates of Pottstown High School, Class of 1919, had no idea what was coming.

They lived in a world where most young people didn't progress past 8th grade. Most only learned basic read-



POTTSTOWN HIGH SCHOOL'S FOOTBALL TEAM OF 1918 did not have a stellar season. They lost to The Hill School, 7-0; to Pottsville, 38-0; and to Norristown 93-0.