

# POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

## Pottstown's come a long way

Last year, PECO ripped up much of High Street to lay new underground electric lines. Cold weather set in before much of the street could be repaved.

Likewise, the borough has a backlog of 11.2 miles of streets that badly need repaving. It's annoying.

The borough has a 10-year, \$39 million infrastructure plan, but streets aren't part of it.

Most of it involves necessary but unglamorous projects like stormwater arch rehabilitation and the replacement of four bridges over the Norfolk Southern railroad tracks. These projects really won't improve the appearance and livability of the town.

It's good to remember, therefore, that for most of Pottstown's 207-year existence as a borough, our town was amazingly primitive by today's standards.

Here is a description of Pottstown in the 1930s by Shandy Hill, the co-founding editor of *The Mercury*:

*There was but a short inadequate sewer system. At least half the community's homes was not hooked up with it.*

*Much of Pottstown was dumping raw sewage into creeks throughout the borough.*

*The schools were housed in dark, dingy firetraps.*

*Toilet facilities were outdoors. Most had no electric lights.*

*Human waste was disposed of in pits beneath "backyard bungalows" that frequently had to be dredged. Septic tanks to disintegrate the waste were unpopular.*

*Pottstown was governed by an unwieldy body of 20 councilmen. The*

*police department and its chief of police were appointed at the whim of the council.*

*When council's political complexion changed, so did the police. The "ins" were "outs." There was no such thing as civil service; there were no examinations for police. In fact, one policeman was unable to read or write.*



Commentary by  
Tom Hylton

*Streets were in deplorable condition. Less than a sixth of them were paved. Pottstown's main street was brick-paved. There was no traffic control except one hand-controlled traffic semaphore at the town's busiest intersection.*

*Pottstown's water company was privately owned. The water not only tasted bad, but it was hard to get connections, because the private firm restricted its service area.*

Today we have a modern water treatment plant supplying 4.5 million gallons of water to Pottstown and surrounding areas through 115 miles of underground pipes. The water is continuously tested for safety.

Every home and business is connected to the borough's sanitary sewer system of 70 miles of underground pipes leading to the borough's frequently upgraded sewage treatment plant.

All streets are paved, and the borough owns and operates 41 traffic lights that are looped together and electronically coordinated.

We have an apolitical borough manager, a professional police force, and (thankfully) seven council members instead of 20.

And we have beautifully renovated schools, all climate controlled.

We love to complain. But in the perspective of history, we've never had it so good.



**YORK STREET a century ago, when few Pottstown streets were paved.**