

**A Brief History of the Pottstown Area Artists Guild
(Information provided by Dorla Dean Slider and Mildred
Sands Kratz Johnson)**

The Pottstown Area Artists Guild was started in 1960 when Fred and Sarah Griesemer, both of whom worked at Binder's Drug Store near High and Charlotte Streets in Pottstown, met with several other interested artists to discuss how to promote the arts in the area. Fred was the pharmacist and Sarah was in charge of the art supply section at the front of the store. They met with Albert and Sylvia Sanft (then owners of William's Pontiac in Boyertown); Jim Landis, a multi-talented and energetic artist from Boyertown; Mildred Sands Kratz; and, Dorla Dean Slider. The discussion involved the formation of an organization whose purpose was to bring together area artists to promote the local art "scene" through shows, lectures, and classes. Of the original charter members and founders Dorla Dean Slider is the only one who still actively participates in the Guild.

In the beginning such events as National Art Week were observed by displaying member's work in local store windows such as Levitz Furniture. Since this was the pre-mall era, High Street was flourishing and even *The Mercury* offered free advertisements for Guild events. Another popular summertime activity were the "clothes line" art shows held all along High Street. Some of the Pottstown Area Artists Guild's first major art exhibits were held in the showroom of William's Pontiac. There were no prizes, but everyone was encouraged to vote for their favorite works of art. As the Guild grew and became more "famous" later shows were held in the community room of the old First Federal Building at High and Hanover Streets where the work was judged and prizes were awarded.

The first meeting of the Pottstown Area Artists Guild was held in September, 1960, in a member's private home. However, because of size requirements later meetings were moved to Cedarville Methodist Church; then to Leader Nursing Home on North Charlotte Street; and finally to the Hill School Center for the Performing Arts where the Guild continues to meet the third Tuesday of the month from September through May at 7:30 PM. In the early years enough interest was generated to rent space above a shop on High Street where classes were scheduled with various noted Philadelphia artists such as Ben Eisenstaedt; regionally recognized artists Ranulph Bye from Bucks County, Fred Bees from Bethlehem, and Oliver Grimley from Norristown; and, local instructors such as Carmine DeVivi of the Hill School. Free sketch classes were also held with groups working from live models.

Since then the Guild has become a non-profit corporation. The Pottstown Area Artists Guild, Incorporated will continue to grow and develop. We currently have close to forty members. In addition to our annual art shows we continue to promote the arts in our community through workshops; Art Goes to School Programs; awards for promising high school artists; and our free guest artist lectures and demonstrations.

Pottstown Area Artists' Guild