

The Levittown Exhibit

A Labor of Love

David Marable is a patient and persistent man. When the old Rollerama Skating Center closed down, he asked permission to take the old familiar sign that had beckoned to Levittown kids for so many years. He ran into a thicket of red tape from the new owners of the property. "It took a full year to get permission," Mr. Marable said.

He endured another yearlong wait when the old Levittown Post Office on Route 13 was slated for demolition. Mr. Marable asked for the large (6' x 6') plate glass panel that had stood at the main entry. "When they finally agreed," he said, "they gave me exactly one hour to come and get it. I brought my son, and we managed to get it out in one piece."

The Rollerama sign and the Levittown Post Office glass are now part of Mr. Marable's vast trove of Levittown memorabilia. His collection includes such Levittown icons as original black floor tiles, bamboo curtains, old newspapers and magazines, hard hats from the old Fairless Steelworks, racing programs from the Langhorne Speedway, and a pair of seats from the old Town Theatre movie house in the Levittown Shopping Center, among hundreds of other items.

Collecting and curating the material has been a labor of love for the lifelong Levittown resident. His periodic exhibits have drawn interested crowds both locally and as far away as the Pennsylvania State Museum in Harrisburg.

"For our 50th Anniversary exhibit at the Levittown Library in 2002," he said, "we drew 500 people in a single day." He is now preparing for an even bigger display in 2012, to mark Levittown's 60th year. He has had difficulty finding a venue. "I've contacted all four municipalities," he said, "without getting a reply." He is also seeking sponsors and funding assistance.

Despite the obstacles, Mr. Marable remains confident; as noted, he is a man who perseveres. He concedes, though, that there was one time when he took no for an answer. "Someone was remodeling, and offered me a toilet from an original Levittown home," he said. "My wife Pam put her foot down—'Dave, you will not be collecting other people's toilets!'" ■

Sample items from David Marable's Levittown collection will be on display at the Levittown Library during the month of August. A new set of items will be displayed each week. Mr. Marable collects stories, photographs and memorabilia of Levittown and Fairless Hills. Please contact him at 215-945-4558.

Clockwise from right: the Rollerama sign; the Levittown Times announces the birth of the first baby; an old postcard of the Levittown Shopping Center; a trade magazine depicting the Fairless Steelworks; an aerial view of the PA Turnpike in the 1940's, showing future Levittown land.

All Photos by Alan J. Micklin

