



# Downingtown Area Historical Society *History Notes*

Interesting bits of Downingtown area history

April 25, 2019

Volume 2, Issue 8

## The Lyndhurst Electric Farm at Thorndale

If you lived in Philadelphia or the Main Line suburbs in 1931 and took a Sunday drive west along the Lincoln Highway (Route 30), you may have passed through what was dubbed the highway's "hot dog and comfort station sector." This was the area roughly between Paoli and Coatesville which separated the affluent Main Line with the rural portions of western Chester and eastern Lancaster Counties. Here, you might have stopped to top off your gas tank or pulled over for an ice cream cone at a roadside stand. If you continued through Downingtown you might have past a sign or two for the area's new tourist attraction: The "Lyndhurst Electric Farm."

The Lyndhurst Electric Farm was owned by George J. Hoopes and was the first electrically operated farm in Pennsylvania. It was located on the north side of Lincoln Highway in Thorndale, Caln Township about two miles west of Downingtown (where the Caln Village Shopping Center is now located). The project was started by George Hoopes himself, but with the assistance of the Philadelphia Electric Company, the Chester Valley Electric Company, and various manufacturers of electric farm equipment.

The farm's purpose was to demonstrate the efficiencies and cost savings of using electricity in most farming activities. Electric conduit was laid underground on the Hoopes Farm to the farmhouse and each of the farm buildings.

(continued on next page)

YOU'RE INVITED  
*to Come and See*  
WHAT ELECTRICITY MEANS  
TO THE FARM

It is a significant fact that the electrified farm finds more and more uses for electricity year after year. You, too, will be interested to see how electricity is lessening the costs and the chores of farming, and making the country home more livable.

MILK COOLING WITH AN AERATOR  
is just one of the many things  
done ELECTRICALLY

*Visit*  
LYNDHURST ELECTRICAL FARM  
at  
THORNDALE  
(on the Lincoln Highway 2 miles west  
of Downingtown in Chester County, Pa.)

CHESTER VALLEY ELECTRIC COMPANY  
COATESVILLE, PA.

*This advertisement for the Lyndhurst Electric Farm was placed in the September 4, 1931 issue of the Downingtown Archive.*

Though Hoopes operated it as a standard farm for years, the official opening of it as an electric farm occurred the evening of June 3, 1931 with a “delicious chicken dinner, topped off with strawberry shortcake, followed by cigars.” The 100 or so invited guests of Mr. and Mrs. Hoopes included a number of officials from various electric and gas companies from around Pennsylvania; local, county, and state politicians; farm implement and equipment manufacturers; and representatives from farm organizations. After a number of short speeches, tours were made of the farmhouse, barn, poultry house, and other buildings to show off the latest in electric technology.

The farmhouse itself “was equipped with every electrical device for the benefit and aid of the housewife, including everything from an electric range to a waffle iron.” In the barn, large lights lit up the entire space and farm tasks that once required a significant amount of manual labor were now done by electrically-operated machinery. One electric motor was used for several tasks including the operation of a hay hoist, filling the silo, and operating a wood saw. Also in the barn, a portable electric water heater was used to heat water for any veterinary needs that might arise.

In the milk house, the milking machine was electrically operated, and dairy utensils were washed with hot water from an electrical hot water heater and dried with an electric air sterilizer. Milk was cooled over an electric aerator and then stored in an electric milk cooling cabinet that kept milk a constant low temperature, even on the hottest days.

In the poultry house, overhead lights equipped with reflectors were controlled by an electric time clock which turned the lights on early in the morning. Sun lamps were also installed to furnish ultra-violet rays during the winter months. Chicks were hatched in an all-electric incubator, and the chicken brooders, which had a capacity for 500 chicks, were all electric and controlled by a thermostat.

Lyndhurst’s workshop was operated by four large overhead lights. In addition, a grinding wheel, soldering iron, and other equipment were all operated by electricity.

Being the first farm in the state to operate on electricity, and with its location right on the Lincoln Highway, Hoopes turned his farm into a tourist attraction. Signs went up on the Lincoln Highway and advertisements were placed in local newspapers. It is not clear if Hoopes charged any type of admission fee for farm visitors. Later that summer, another electric farm was opened in western Pennsylvania.



*The Lyndhurst Electric Farm is on a 1935 map.*



*The opening of the Lyndhurst Electric Farm was featured in area newspapers including the Philadelphia Inquirer, Daily Local News, Coatesville Record, and Downingtown Archive.*

(continued on next page)



We are not sure how long the farm stayed open as a tourist attraction, or even how long George Hoopes farmed the property. Hoopes died in 1944 and the barn and home were eventually razed. If you have more information on the Lyndhurst Electric Farm please let us know.

*Below, the top photograph shows the Lyndhurst Electric Farm on Route 30 in Thorndale. It was probably taken in the early 1930s. The bottom image was taken recently from the same vantage point.*





## Last Issue's Mystery Pic

**John Miller**, Wallace Township Archivist, is a truly perceptive scholar because he was the first person to identify the image below as the old Glen Moore Mill on Fairview Road in Glenmoore, Wallace Township (several readers thought it was the Embreeville Mill in Newlin Township). We blurred out the sign on the building when we posted the image in the last issue. The image is from 1933 and is courtesy of the Hagley Museum and Library. The mill was torn down when the bridge over the Brandywine Creek was replaced.

**Bonnie Radford** sent us a short history of the Mill (right).

### THE GLEN MOORE GRIST MILL

1752

*Glen Moore, Wallace Township, Chester County, Pennsylvania*

This ancient grist mill, which supplied flour to Washington's army during the Revolution, was built in 1752. It stands "at the crossroads leading from Pughtown to Brandywine Manor and on a State Road from Downingtown to Reading." In an advertisement of 1785, the mill was described as "having two pairs of stones, one of which were excellent burrs, the works almost new and in perfect order."

Two James Moores have been associated with this mill, and were probably not related. The first James Moore was the one who built the mill, after having laid claim to a Penn grant that extended along the Brandywine 208 perches on both sides of the stream, and included a total of 164 acres. On 58 acres he built a dam and mill race for two mills; a saw mill on the west side and the grist mill on the east side of the stream. He also built a fine stone mansion that stood on the crest of the hill overlooking the Brandywine, which was destroyed by fire in 1796. Another "fine stone house" was constructed in 1800, which stands just south of the first one, and is still in existence today.

On December 20, 1774, James Moore, together with Anthony Wayne, Thomas Hickley and thirty others, was chosen on a Committee of Safety for Chester County which met during the Revolution to cope with problems of defense and to assist in equipping the Continental Army. This James Moore died in 1802 and is buried in the graveyard of the Brandywine Manor Church.

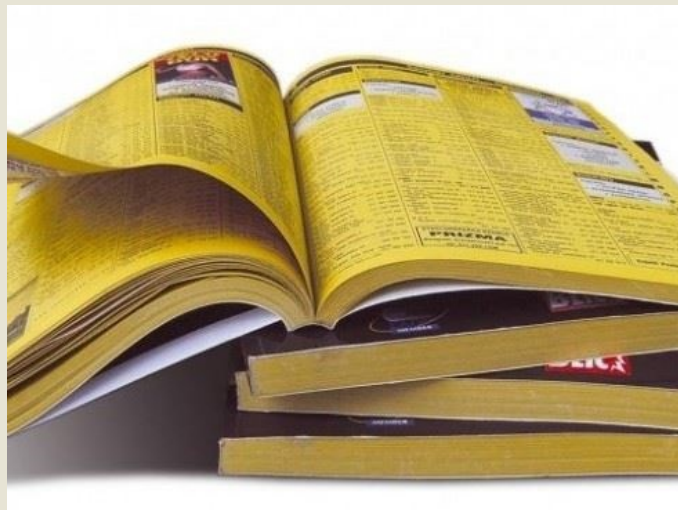
The second James Moore is something of a legend, but it is known that he helped organize the Fairview Church in 1840. He and his descendants occupied the mill and plantation from 1856 until 1882. The property then passed into the possession of the Howson family. The Misses Beatrice and Margaret Howson now live in the sturdy old mansion, and the former general store, standing across the road from the mill, is now an apartment house.

Much of the above information was obtained from *Wallace Township History* by Olive Cadbury, at the Chester County Historical Society.



# Old Phone Books?

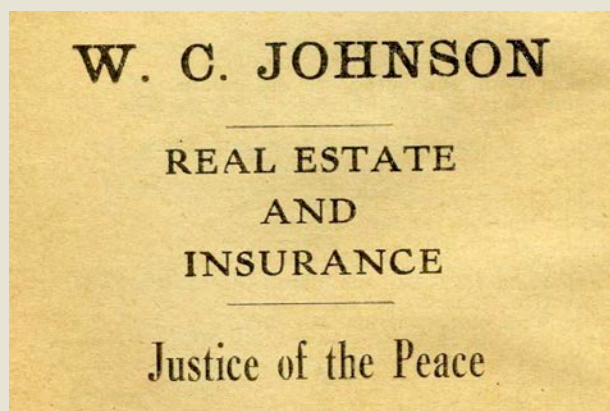
Do you have old phone books in your home that include listings for the Downingtown area? Phone books can be great tools for historic research. We are especially interested in listings from the 1950s through the 1980s. Let us know!



## In The (Old) News – Items that Made Headlines Back in the Day

The article on the right was copied verbatim from the February 11, 1926 issue of the Downingtown Archive. It describes the harrowing evening of Wilmer C. Johnson who had a real estate and insurance office at 66 West Lancaster Avenue in Downingtown.

At the time of the article, Johnson was a 41-year-old married father of three girls.



*Burglars and hold-up men hereafter will approach Wilmer C. Johnson of this Boro with much care and diplomacy.*

*On Tuesday evening, shortly before eight o'clock, one of this gentry undertook to deprive Wilmer of cash and valuables. The operation was decidedly unsuccessful.*

*The intruder, with a dirty handkerchief covering his face and grasping a terrible looking automatic, entered the rear door of Mr. Johnson's office. Mr. Johnson was entirely alone, attending to his business and unsuspecting of trouble. The bad man, with the artillery pointed at Wilmer's head demanded money, and that quickly. He advanced toward his prey, and then in about two seconds there was a dandy scrap in progress. Wilmer, not in the least intimidated grabbed a heavy ruler and brought it down on the man's head and simultaneously made a grab for the gun. In the rumpus the gun was discharged several times but affected no damage beyond putting a few holes in the walls and floor.*

*Speedily realizing that he had started something he couldn't finish, the bad man finally made a mad rush for the wide open spaces, out of reach of Wilmer's fists. In such a hurry was he that he ran right from under his cap, and out of his overcoat, but not before a bullet ripped through the shoulder of his overcoat. He however made a successful get-away across the fields toward the railroad.*

*The police were soon in action, and the following morning arrested a couple of promising suspects, and gave them a tough hour or so to explain their whereabouts at the time of the attempted holdup. Both were able to prove their innocence to the satisfaction of the police, and so far the right party has not been located. In all probability he is still running.*



## Thank You!!!!

Thank you to the person who dropped off a dolly/hand truck at the Ashbridge House recently. We didn't see a note, and we are not aware of an email or phone message, so we don't know who it was. But whoever made the generous gift, THANK YOU!

We also want to thank a number of folks who recently dropped off items for the Ashbridge House including light bulbs and paper towels.



## Downingtown Area Group Photo

Pictured below are members of the Mother's Club of West Ward School in 1950. The image was taken when the mom's put on the play 'The Little Red Schoolhouse.'

Front row, L to R: Louise White, Sue Rodgers, Edna Ross, Isabel Entrekin, Marion Simmons.

Back row, L to R: Betty Manzi, Marian Noll, Emily Lewis, Ginny Henry, Harriet Ash, Jean Priest, Margaret McCombs, Caroline Hadfield.





## Downingtown Area Mystery Pic

Can you identify the location in the photograph below? The first person to correctly identify the location of this photo will be recognized as a truly perceptive scholar. Extra points if you can name the man in the photograph. Please send your response to: [dahs19335@gmail.com](mailto:dahs19335@gmail.com).



# Advertisements for Non-Profits

## ***West Caln Historical Society***

The West Caln Historical Society will hold a meeting on Tuesday, May 21, 2019 at 7 P.M. in the West Caln Municipal Building, 721 West Kings Highway, Wagontown, PA on the subject of: **Pennsylvania Long Rifles**. The speaker will be David Geiger, an historian, arms & armor specialist, appraiser, and auctioneer. David has been involved with weapons and long rifles all his life. He is a fourth-generation antique firearms collector, dealer, and appraiser. He will talk about the connection between Kentucky and Pennsylvania long rifles. He has been collecting arms and armor since he was 5 years old, and buying and selling since 10.

***East Brandywine Historical Commission Spring 2019 Speakers Series*** (all programs presented at East Brandywine Township Building at 3:30 PM)

- **April 28, 2019 – Follow the Brandywine for the Geology, Ecology and Architectural Features of the Border of East Brandywine.** Come and learn about the unique geology, ecology, and history of our area. We'll hear about the East Brandywine Trail that borders the Brandywine Creek (and East Brandywine Township) and how geology matched with man's ingenuity dictated the path. We will also discuss the importance of building, maintaining and expanding suburban green spaces that ensures the health of both humans and animals. Christine Coccozza is a Science teacher at Methacton School District where she teaches Biology and Environmental Science. An avid world traveler, long distance hiker, climber and scuba diver she will present this program that will open your eyes to what's around you that you may never have noticed!
- **May 19, 2019 – The Special Barns of Chester County.** Our speaker specializes in pre-civil war era house and barn architecture of Holland Dutch and Swiss-German areas. He has documented more than 8,000 vernacular buildings that include more than 5,000 homestead barns. Our Chester County barns have long been recognized by barn observers for their forms and styles and their diverse building materials. We'll look at records of barns built 1750 to 1900. Greg Huber is an independent scholar, consultant and principal owner of Past Perspectives and Eastern Barn Consultants and will hold a book signing following his talk. He is the author of 265 articles on barn and house architecture and has led more the 110 house and barn tours.

## ***Uwchlan Township Historical Commission***

The Uwchlan Township Historical Commission will open the Edith P. Moore Schoolhouse (9 North Village Avenue, Lionville) and the John Cadwalader House (21 North Village Avenue, Lionville) on the first Sunday of each month, April through November. Hours for both are 2PM-4PM.

## ***Lyme Disease Association of Southeastern Pennsylvania***

The Lyme Disease Association of Southeastern Pennsylvania, an education and support group for patients and caregivers who have been affected by Lyme Disease, will meet Wednesday, April 17, 2019 at 7PM at the Kennett Friends Meeting House on PA Rt 82 (125 W. Sickie St., Kennett Square, PA 19348). This will be a special support meeting to answer your questions, share your experiences, and meet others who are battling Lyme Disease. Meetings are free and all are welcome. Check [www.lymepa.org](http://www.lymepa.org) for directions.

## ***Chester County Marine Corps League Detachment***

BINGO on the first and third Saturday of every month, 420 Chestnut Street. Public welcome. Kitchen opens at 5:30, Bingo Cards on sale at 6:00, Early Bird Special 6:30. Food is available for purchase. Funds used by the Marine Corps League and Marine Corps League Ladies Auxiliary to help veterans from all branches of the service as well as others in the community.

## ***Community Luncheon***

Central Presbyterian Church, 100 W Uwchlan Ave, Downingtown, holds a monthly Community Luncheon from 11 AM until 1 PM on the first Thursday of each month, October through May. Their popular chili, chicken corn noodle, vegetable beef, and cream of potato soups are sold, along with sandwiches, salad platters, homemade desserts and beverages. For take-out service, call 610-269-1576 and ask for the kitchen. Bring a friend, meet a neighbor, or come alone and enjoy good food and fellowship.

## ***Greater Downingtown Business and Professional Women (BPW)***

Meets monthly on the 2nd Wednesday evening, at 6 pm, in the Thorndale Inn for a dinner, networking, program and meeting. All area women are welcome. Most nights there is a program such as a speaker. Call Mary Coyne for your reservation for dinner at 610-380-8869. We meet each month from September to June.

## ***Joseph's People, Downingtown chapter***

An ecumenical support mission to help unemployed or underemployed people. The group is entirely conducted by volunteers, and has been at St. Joseph's since 1995. Meets at 7:30 PM on the 2nd & 4th Tuesdays of the month. All are welcome. Visit web page, <http://josephspeople.org/our-chapters/downingtwn/>, or just come to a meeting at St. Joseph's Parish Meeting Room behind the school, 460 Manor Ave., Downingtown. Call 610-873-7117. Leave Message. Leader: Cheryl Spaulding, Email: [cheryl.spaulding@josephspeople.org](mailto:cheryl.spaulding@josephspeople.org).



---

## Historical Society's Wish List

The Downingtown Area Historical Society is a non-profit organization proudly maintaining the 310-year-old Ashbridge House and a large archives. The society can always use gifts in kind with an immediate need for:

- General household items and office supplies including:
  - Pens and pencils
  - Scotch tape and masking tape
  - Copier paper (both color and white)
  - Light bulbs
  - Paper towels
  - Large and small trash bags
- Amazon gift cards or gift cards to Home Depot or Lowes. Sometimes we need to make quick purchases so gift cards would come in very handy.

To make a tax-deductible cash donation, use this link  
or send a check to the address below. Thank you!



---

### Downingtown Area Historical Society

P.O. Box 9, Downingtown, PA 19335

610-269-1709

[dths1709@gmail.com](mailto:dths1709@gmail.com)

<https://www.downingtownhistory.org>

Like us on Facebook:



Follow us on Twitter:



Check out our *Then & Now* series on YouTube:



### DAHS Board of Directors

**President:** Phil Dague

**Vice President:** Jim Sundman

**Recording Secretary:** Marion Piccolomini

**Corresponding Secretary:** Donna Capriotti

**Treasurer:** Lauren Fagan

**Directors:** Mike Dunn, Jay Worrall, Robin Ashby,  
Jordan Staub, Karen Steinbach

**Presidents Emeritus:** Roger Grigson, Parry Desmond