



# Downingtown Area Historical Society *History Notes*

Interesting bits of Downingtown area history

June 14, 2018

Volume 1, Issue 11

## The Antique Ice Tool Museum & Brandywine River Ice Harvesting

If you get a chance, we highly recommend you check out the Antique Ice Tool Museum in West Chester. One of our members visited recently and went away very impressed by both the quality and depth of the displays.

The museum takes up three floors of a beautifully restored 1834 bank barn and houses not only an extraordinary collection of ice tools and vehicles, but also documents the history of the natural ice trade.

Peter Stack and his family founded the museum. Stack (the former owner of Brandywine Ice Co.) needed a place to house his large collection of ice tools, vehicles, photographs, and ephemera, and thought a dilapidated barn on Sconnelltown Road would be the ideal location. He purchased it in 2009 and spent nearly three years restoring it before opening the museum to the public in 2012.

(continued on next page)



*This ice wagon (above) is one of several on display at the Antique Ice Tool Museum. Photo courtesy of the museum.*



*Scores of antique ice tongs hang from the ceiling (below, left). The museum houses antique motor vehicles on its third floor (below).*





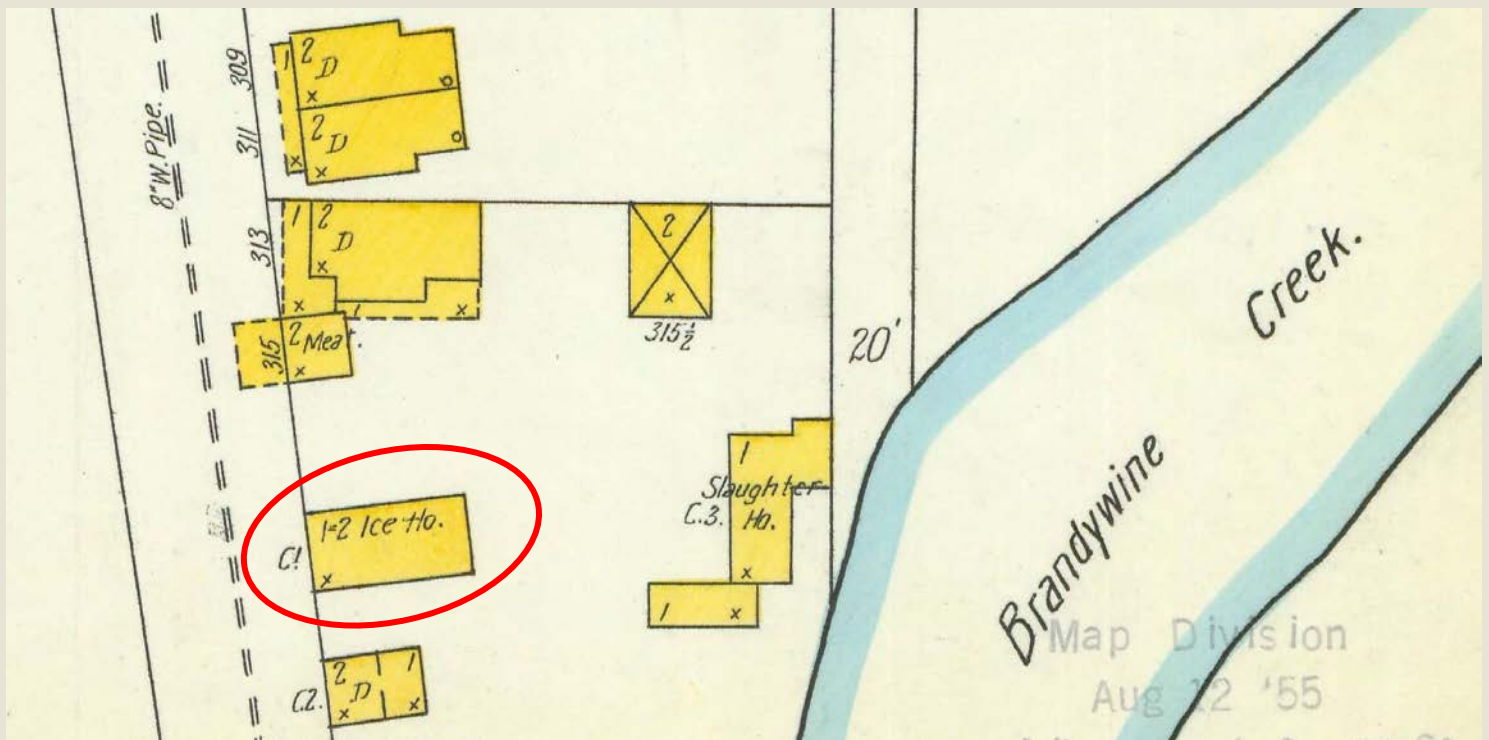
The museum is located at 825 Sconnettown Road in West Chester, and is open 9am-12pm on Saturdays from mid-April to mid-October. Additional times are available by appointment. There is no admission charge.

The museum's website is: <https://www.antiqueicetoolmuseum.org>

After learning about the ice trade, we went through our archives and put together a few items on ice harvesting along the Brandywine River. It was an important industry as the Brandywine supplied ice not only for local use but also for cities like Philadelphia, Wilmington, and Reading.

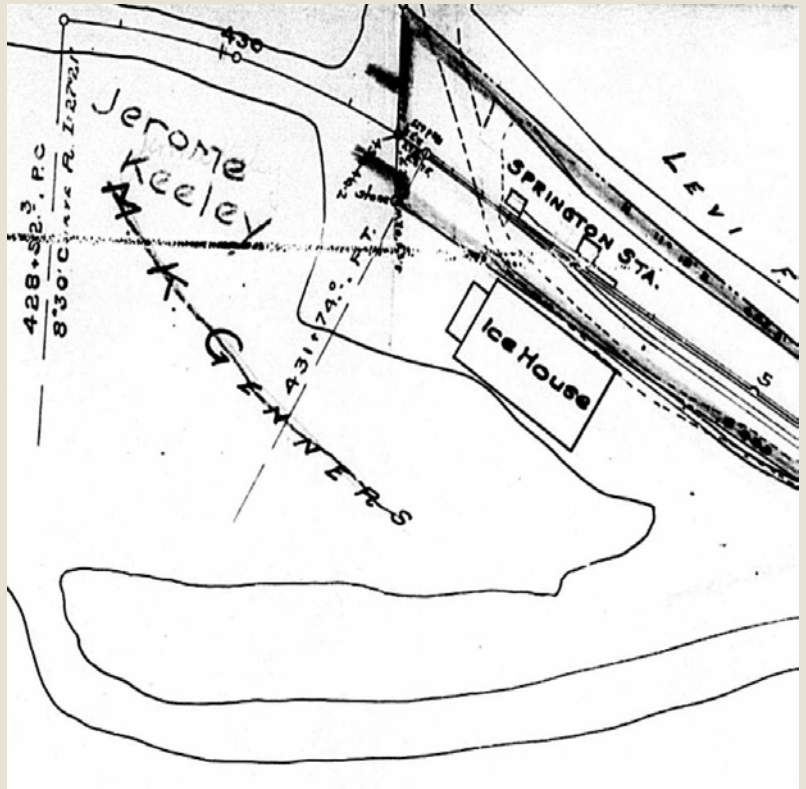
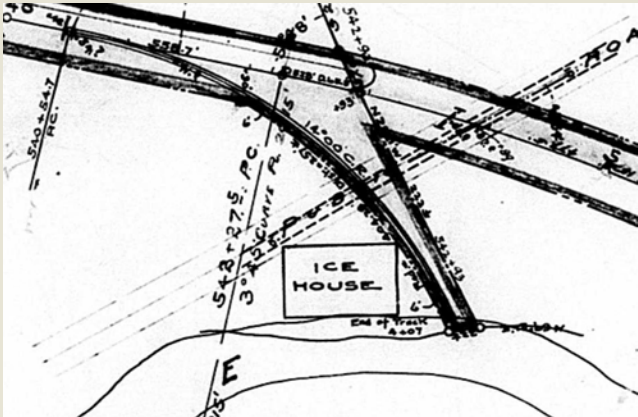


The image above shows ice harvesting facilities at Icedale Lake which was formed by damming a portion of the west branch of the Brandywine River, about five miles south of Honey Brook. The image was probably taken in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and shows the tracks of the Wilmington and Northern Railroad. Ice was loaded directly from the ice houses to railroad cars for shipment to Reading and Wilmington. At one time the Diamond State Ice Company of Wilmington had more than a dozen ice houses here. (Image courtesy of the museum)

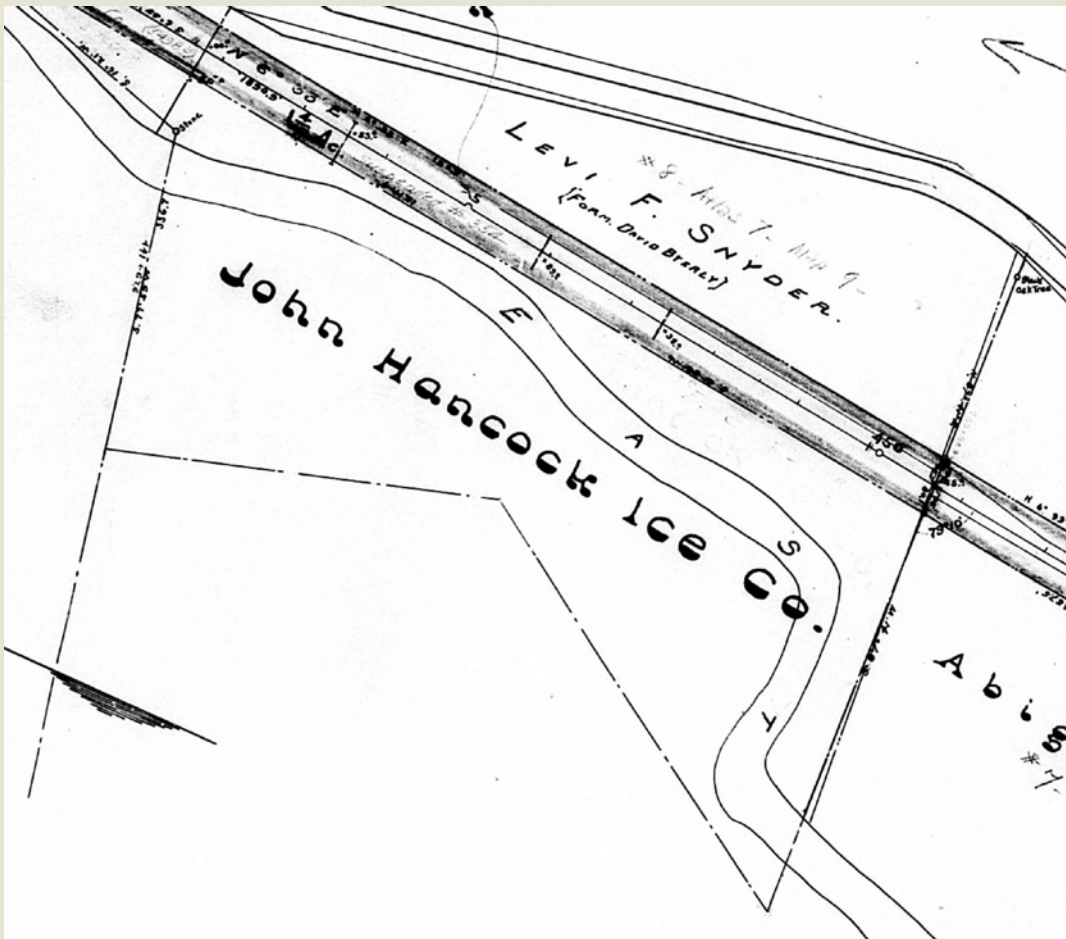


A Downingtown ice house was located in the Johnsontown section of Downingtown on Bradford Avenue within yards of the Brandywine River as seen in the 1903 map.

There was an ice house sandwiched between an ice pond and the railroad tracks of the Downingtown and Lancaster Railroad at Springton a few miles north of Downingtown (right). Similar to the lake at Icedale, the ice pond at Springton was formed by damming the east branch of the Brandywine River. A few miles further up the tracks there was an ice house in Glenmore that had its own railroad siding (below).



The John Hancock Ice Company was a major ice company in Philadelphia. The company owned many ice harvesting facilities in the Philadelphia area including a section of the Brandywine River near Springton.





Do you use a lot of ice? How about having your own ice pond! Charles Hess, who sold ice cream, pies, and cakes, at his bakery on Lancaster Avenue in the early 1900s (advertisement below top) did just that. He owned an ice pond at what is now the corner of Wallace Avenue and Norwood Road – where the Ebenezer Full Gospel Baptist Church is currently located. The pond was located next to the Downingtown and Lancaster Railroad (below bottom).

## It's Good to Eat!

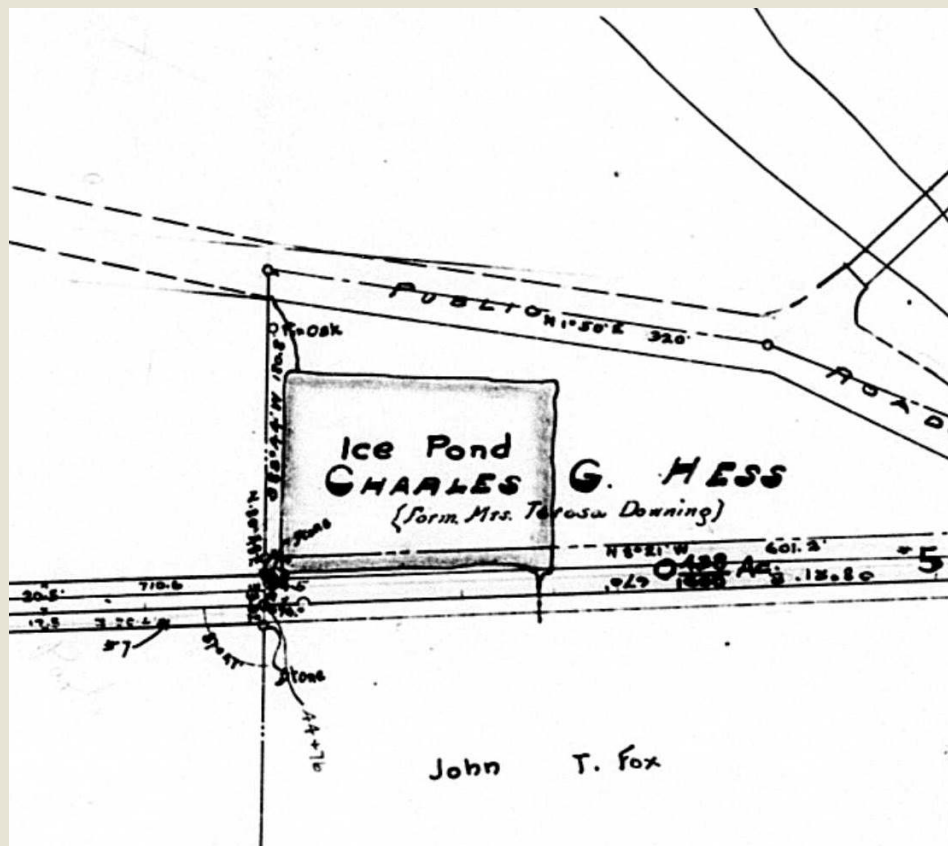
Is our **BREAD**—just a little more delicious and enjoyable than any other bread that's baked. Our **PIES** and **CAKES** are equally delicious, and once tasted are appreciated.

The only place in town where you can enjoy delicious

## Ice Cream

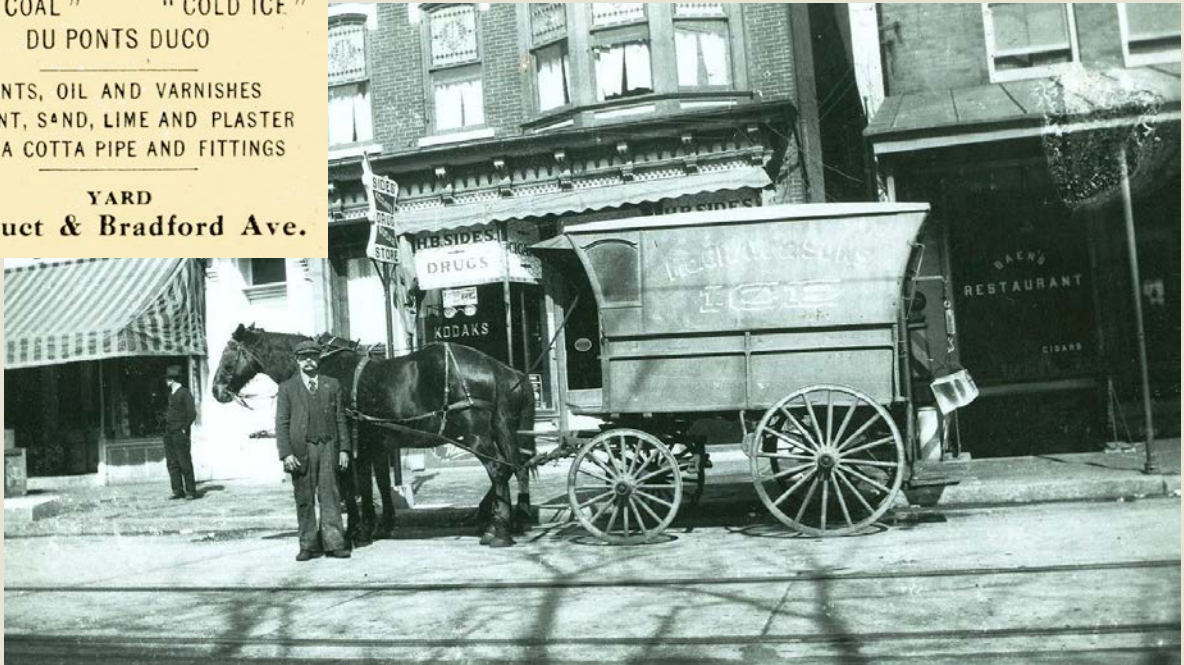
in a pleasant parlor, cooled by rotating fans, which always furnish a fine breeze. Also **WATER ICES** in several flavors.

**C. G. HESS'** Confectionery  
and Bakery,  
ESTABLISHED IN 1876.  
127 E. Lancaster Avenue.



Below are two images of early Downingtown ice wagons. The top image shows the wagon John McGraw and sons who owned an ice and coal business in the Johnsontown section of Downingtown. You can see the block of ice on the scale at the rear of the wagon which is probably being delivered to Baen's Restaurant. The restaurant was located at what is now the parking lot on the east side of the Station Taproom. The bottom image shows the wagon for Josiah Swank who owned an ice and coal business off Brandywine Avenue. Both businesses were located by the railroad for the efficient off-loading of ice and coal.

**McGRAW & SONS**  
 "HOT COAL" "COLD ICE"  
 DU PONT'S DUCO  
 PAINTS, OIL AND VARNISHES  
 CEMENT, SAND, LIME AND PLASTER  
 TERRA COTTA PIPE AND FITTINGS  
 YARD  
 Viaduct & Bradford Ave.



**JOSIAH SWANK**  
 COAL - WOOD - ICE  
 OFFICE: Rear of E. Downingtown Station.  
 Bell Phone 50-W  
 Downingtown, Pa.



## Downingtown Area Group Photo



This photograph was taken during an event in Kerr Park during the 1976 Bicentennial. Recognize anyone?

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

**1868** – On March 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>, train traffic was significantly interrupted by huge snow drifts between Downingtown and Paoli. Some drifts were estimated at 18 feet high.

**1879** – A fox hunt in Upper Uwchlan ended poorly in early January when the animal was cornered in a chestnut tree. S.W. Todd and John Deery came upon the fox at the same time and fought over the tail. A fight ensued and Todd stabbed Deery in the ribs with a knife. Deery survived and ended up suing Todd.

**1883** – It was noted in one newspaper that Milton Sharpless of West Bradford had one sheep that was the color of a fox, another was a chocolate color, and a third was spotted like a fawn.

**1897** – The Philadelphia Inquirer noted on June 19<sup>th</sup> that “all tramps and beggars found in Downingtown will be arrested and put to work breaking stones in the streets of the Borough.”

**1930** – Charles Price, a driver for B.F. Leaman and Sons was on his way home from work on August 4<sup>th</sup> when he was struck in the chin by a stone from a sling shot. The stone was shot by a man in a passing automobile. It was fortunate that Price was not struck in the eye because “it might have ditched the truck and caused considerable damage and perhaps injury.”



## 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. Please send your response to: [dahs19335@gmail.com](mailto:dahs19335@gmail.com). Unfortunately we may get so many responses we aren't able to respond to each one individually. Sorry!



## Last Issue's Mystery Pic

**David Summers** is truly a perceptive scholar because he was the first (and only) person to identify the location of the photo on the right as the old Downingtown Police Department processing room where mug shots and fingerprints were taken. The room was located in Borough Hall when this photograph was taken in the 1960s. David added that he was on the "right" side, not the wrong side of this room!

**Mike Dunn**, a retired Downingtown police officer, who is on the Historical Society's Board of Directors, got a sneak peak of the last issue of History Notes, and he also quickly recognized the location. Mike also spent a lot of time on the right side of this room.







## Downingtown Area Vintage Ad

Today you might go to Best Buy for a TV, but years ago you might have gone to Romig's which was located on West Lancaster Avenue in Downingtown. It was located across from the old Post Office (now Priori's Mattress) as seen below. Romig's began in 1946 and was owned by Rob Romig and Frank Bishop. It was located on Washington Avenue before moving to this site on West Lancaster Avenue.

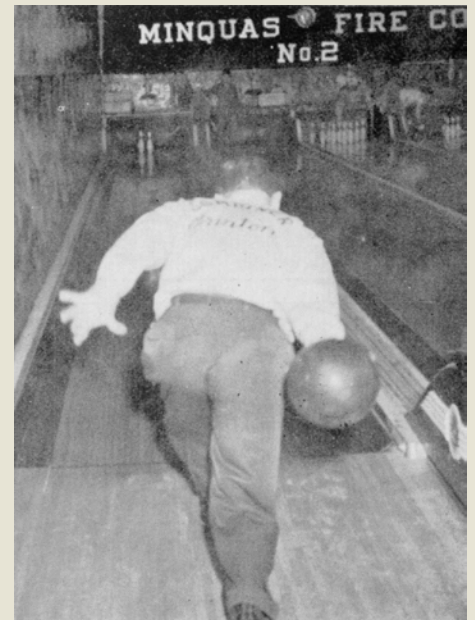


## Ashbridge Artifact



We have a lot of historical artifacts at the Ashbridge House including a bowling pin from the old Minquas Fire House bowling lanes. This pin was donated to us by the family of Hallan Usher. As a boy, Usher would work at the firehouse lanes manually re-setting the pins. Later on he would be the fire chief for Minquas! If you're new to the area and not sure where the old Minquas station was, it is now the home to the East Branch Brewing Company and Estrella Tacos.

It's a bit difficult to see, but the image on the right shows the Minquas bowling lanes during a 1957 game of the Downingtown Paper Company (DOPACO) Athletic Association inter-plant bowling league. If you look close enough you can see some youngsters manually re-setting the pins.





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# Advertisements for Non-Profits

## ***Marshallton United Methodist Church Chicken BBQ Dinner***

The Marshallton United Methodist Church is hosting a Chicken BBQ Dinner on Saturday, July 21, 2018. The menu includes BBQ chicken (leg/thigh), Cole slaw, corn on the cob, baked beans, roll & butter, dessert, and beverage. Hours for the "Eat-in" or "Take-out" option are from 4:30 to 6:30 pm. Cost is \$13/adult and \$5/child (5 to 12 years of age) if ordered before July 17 and \$15/\$5 at the door. The church is located at 1282 West Strasburg Road, West Chester, PA. Contact the church office at (610) 696-5247 or [office@marshalltonchurch.org](mailto:office@marshalltonchurch.org) with any questions.

## ***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, meets on the 3rd Wednesday of every month at 7PM at the Kennett Friends Meeting House on PA Rt 82 (125 W. Sickel St. Kennett Square, PA 19348). Meetings are free and all are welcome. Check [www.lymepa.org](http://www.lymepa.org) for directions and programs.

## ***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 Cindy Markley for your reservation for dinner at 610-363-1404. We meet each month from September to June.

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

The Uwchlan Township Historical Commission will open the Edith P. Moore schoolhouse on the first Sunday of the month from May to November. The hours are 2pm-4pm. The schoolhouse is located on North Village Avenue in Lionville.

## ***Farmers Market***

Downingtown Farmer's Market will be located in Kerr Park every Saturday from 9 AM to 1 PM.

## ***Brochure on DARC Classes & Activities***

You can gain access to the latest Downingtown Area Recreational Consortium brochure, listing all classes and activities, at: [www.darc.info/](http://www.darc.info/). For more info, call 610-269-9260, or stop by the DARC office (8:30 AM-4:30 PM, Monday thru Friday), 114 Bell Tavern Road, Downingtown.

## ***Library Newsletter***

You can sign up to get the Downingtown Library's newsletter via: <http://downingtownlibrary.us12.list-manage.com>

## ***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/downingtown/>, 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).

## Clipping Events

Did you know that as part of our archival collection we have about 14,000 cards in our files that contain newspaper clippings? During most months there are two opportunities at the Historical Society to help clip and paste newspaper articles for this collection. The sessions are held at the Ashbridge House, our 309-year-old headquarters, next to the Chick-Fil-A restaurant in the Ashbridge Square Shopping Center on Route 30 in East Caln. The two sessions are usually:

- **The first Sunday of the month, 1:00-4:00 PM**  
**Next one July 1<sup>st</sup> @ 1:00 PM**
- **The first Tuesday of the month, 6:30-8:00 PM (with pizza!)**  
**Next one September 4<sup>th</sup> @ 6:30 PM**

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## Historical Society's Wish List

The Downingtown Area Historical Society is a non-profit organization proudly maintaining the 309-year-old Ashbridge House and a large archives. The society can always use gifts in kind with an immediate need for:

- A wide, multi-drawer flat file to store maps, and over-size photographs and prints.
- General household items and office supplies including:
  - Light bulbs
  - Paper towels
  - Large and small trash bags
  - Glue sticks (used for our newspaper clippings)
- 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!



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### Downingtown Area Historical Society

P.O. Box 9, Downingtown, PA 19335

610-269-1709

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[www.downingtownareahistoricalsociety.org](http://www.downingtownareahistoricalsociety.org)

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