



# Downingtown Area Historical Society *History Notes*

Interesting bits of Downingtown area history

August 23, 2018

Volume 1, Issue 16

## Downingtown's Most Eligible Bachelors

Someone in Downingtown in the 1890s certainly had a lot of time on their hands to maintain a list of the Borough's most eligible bachelors. But a list was kept "expressly for the benefit of the ladies who have not yet made selections of, or been successful in securing a husband with whom to pass along life's rugged highway."

### *The* **BACHELOR** *(Downingtown 1896 Edition)*

In January 1896 the list appeared in a local newspaper along with a brief description of each of the men's positive qualities. Whether the approximate forty men on the list were agreeable to their inclusion is not known. Regardless, it's quite humorous to read the depictions and one wonders if it resulted in any marriages. Here's how some of them read (copied verbatim):

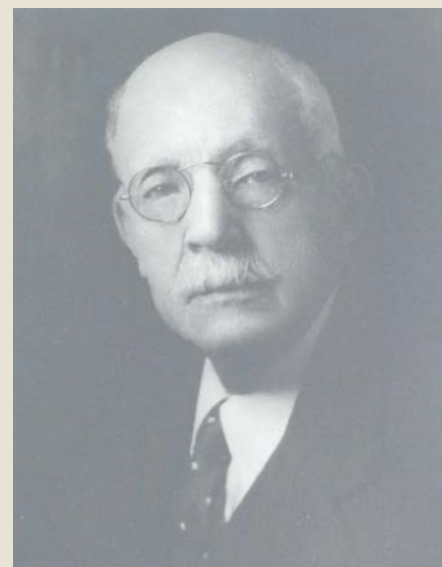
**Uriah Brown**, a well-known auctioneer and stock dealer, often makes Western trips, and he would like a wife to look after the cows and business at home. If you can convince him you are not marrying him for money you will be successful.

**William Balentine**, of the Swan Hotel, is a man that drives a fine horse and is the possessor of a very pretty mustache. If you can convince him that married life is best for him you can get him.

**Barclay Beale** is one of the youngest bachelors in town. He had a nice girl in West Chester, but she has moved away, and he now mourns the loss of his six o'clock chats over the telephone. But there are others, and if you try again you will succeed.

**Frank Walbert** is likened unto a perfect apple in the eyes of a Brandywine Avenue girl, and the result can best be solved by a preacher.

**Abiah Ringwalt**, the florist, has furnished flowers many times for weddings and he sometimes wishes he had a wife of his own upon whom to lavish these luxuries of nature.



*Thomas Downing (1851-1940)  
was a banker and life-long  
bachelor in Downingtown.*

(continued on next page)

**Peter Sheridan**, the tailor, is suave and fine looking, a pleasing conversationalist, and a man who has made profound impressions with the ladies. Why he remains single no one can guess.

**Philip Kurtz** is a little backward in the company of ladies. He is industrious, has no vices, and would take kindly to the advances of a nice young lady.

**William Broschard**, the tonsorial artist, is fond of the company of ladies, but he says his brother Philip has the lead of him now so many years that he has no heart to enter the wife getting race.

**Philip Kurtz** is a little backward in the company of ladies. He is industrious, has no vices, and would take kindly to the advances of a nice young lady.

**Prof. John R. Hunsicker** has cheeks as pretty as roses and there are a number of school teachers in Chester County who would be delighted to complete the handsome principal's domestic happiness.

**Samuel A. Black** is one of the best looking and best dressed bachelors in the town. His glossy black hair is much admired by the ladies, and his well-groomed mustache is a joy to those who are fortunate enough to touch it. He is known in society parlance as a "lady's man."

**Thomas Downing**, the cashier of the Downingtown National Bank, takes a particular delight in taking the ladies out driving, and if some of his lady friends would use the proper diplomacy he might be induced to become a benedict before it is too late.

**Joseph R. Downing** is President of the National Bank and has lived a contented single life so long that the ladies who have admired him in vain have pronounced him a confirmed bachelor. But who knows but what he might follow the example of ex-President Harrison and yet take unto himself the luxury of a wife.



*Despite having "cheeks as pretty as roses", Downingtown High School principal John R. Hunsicker (top-middle) never married. This photo was taken of the high school teachers in 1890.*

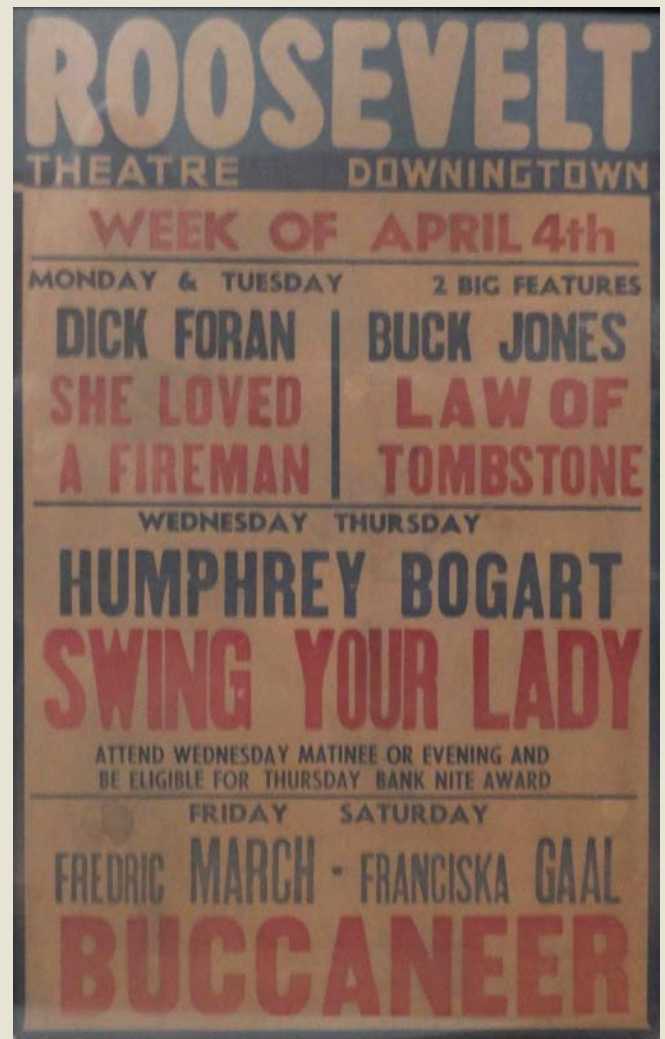


*William Broschard (right) is seen in this undated image taken in front of his barber shop. He remained a bachelor his entire life having "no heart to enter the wife getting race."*

## Ashbridge Artifact

We have a number of posters in our archives advertising the latest films showing at the Roosevelt Theater on Brandywine Avenue. These were often placed in store fronts around town.

The films on this particular poster were released in late 1937 or early 1938, so it is most likely advertising for the week of April 4, 1938.



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

**1875** – On July 14th while a train was traveling through Downingtown a man refused to give up an empty seat next to him to another passenger. The man who wanted to sit down started to beat, then stabbed the man with a knife, but was pulled off by another passenger before he could inflict more harm. A conductor telegraphed ahead to Lancaster where the attacker was arrested and the victim hospitalized.

**1875** – According to the Reading Times, "Mr. Joseph J. Smedley, of Uwchlan Township Chester County, has just harvested a new kind of wheat known as Ivy wheat. Mr. S. planted three grains which yielded 22 stalks, each ten feet high. On these grew 33 heads, 22 of which yielded 600 grains each and 11, 590 grains each, making a total of 137,500 grains. The wheat is planted in hills in the same manner as corn. It is said to make an excellent bread."

**1881** – In mid-November West Bradford farmer Ellis Wood went to check on his horse in his barn and found it almost buried in oats. The oats were stored in a granary immediately above the stall where the horse was kept, and it was able to chew a hole in the floor in an attempt to reach them. With oats pouring through the hole in the floor, the "hungry equine" couldn't stop the flow of the feed, and he soon found himself engulfed by 300 bushels of oats. The horse "would no doubt have paid the penalty of his greed with his life had he not been discovered and promptly relieved by his master."

**1892** – According to the Wilkes-Barre Times Leader, "a farmer of West Bradford, Chester County, exterminates groundhogs by lowering a bottle of powder in their holes in the earth and blowing them up."

**1906** – Martin T. Moore of West Bradford shot 38 ground hogs in two weeks and sold them for \$30.



## Downingtown Did-You-Know?

Did you know the McDonald's in the center of Downingtown opened in early 1976? It is currently going through a major renovation and we checked our archives to see when it first opened. The newspaper picture on the right came from the East Branch Citizen and shows the ground-breaking in November 1975. Don Greenleaf, Downingtown's Borough Manager at the time, is second from the right.



## Downingtown Area Group Photo



This issue's group photo shows the 1952 Downingtown Little League All-Star Team. From left to right:

Bottom row: Tim Mahan, Charles Clayton, ? Poluch, Otto Munzenmayer, Steve Fusco, Jack Law, Anthony Antonelli, Ken VanLew, unknown (last name may be Moore or Miller)

Top row: Coach Chad Campbell, Gerald Williams, Buddy White, Robert Lee, Jack Swarner, John Graveno, Coach Bus Phillips



## Items For Our Archives

Thank you to **Debbie Lutchkus** who recently sent us a package of Downingtown-related items for our archives. We often encourage people if they have items that have a connection to the Downingtown area such as photographs, letters, deeds, or other historical items related to local businesses, churches, schools, industry, etc., to please let us know. This often happens when a person who has lived in the Downingtown area a long time passes away and the family is unsure of what to do with certain items.



## Downingtown Area Mystery Pic

Can you identify the location in the photograph below (extra points if you can identify the type of car!)? 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 many responses so we aren't able to respond to each one individually. Sorry!



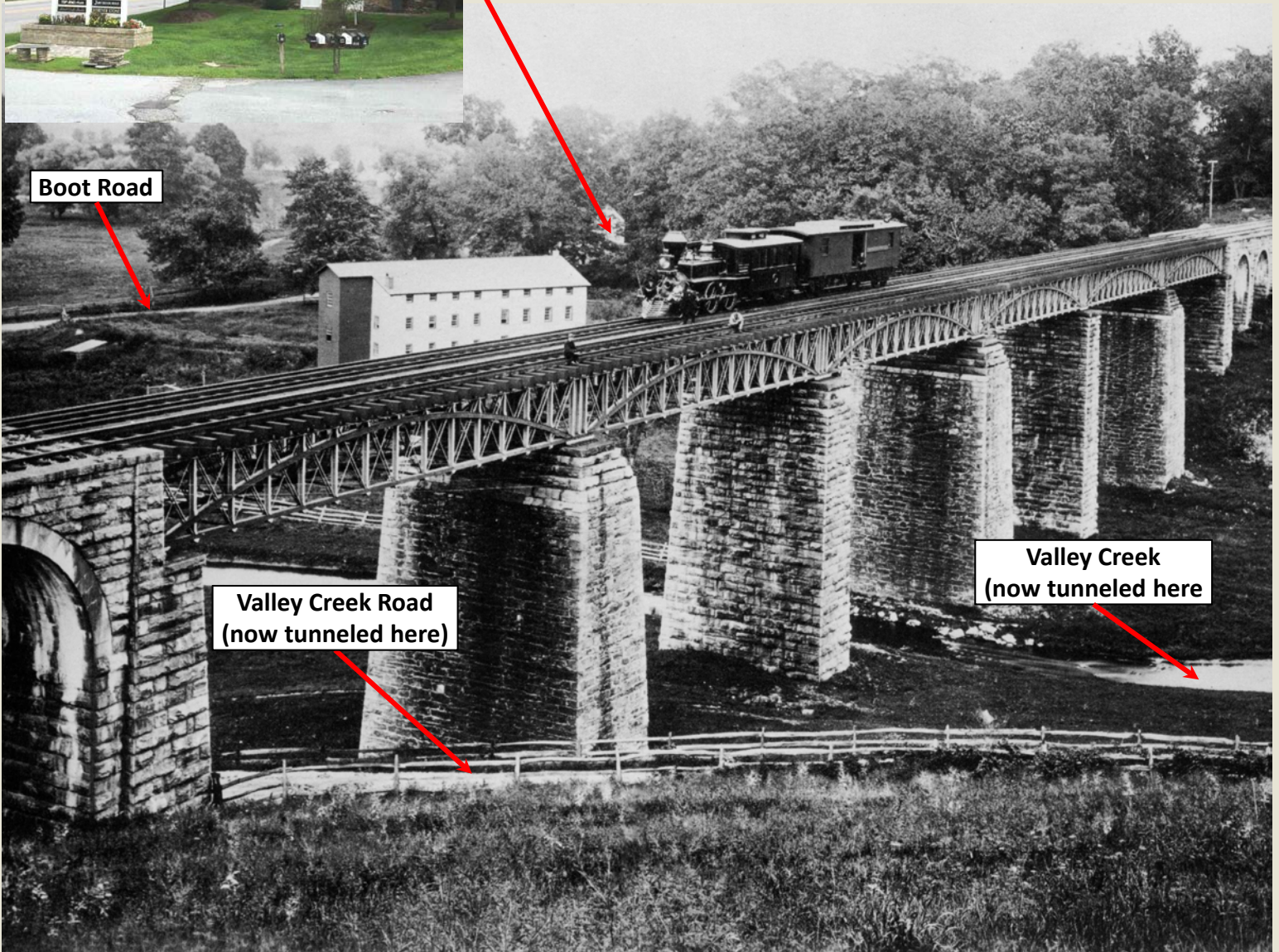


## Last Issue's Mystery Pic

Last issue's Mystery Pic finally stumped our readers (we didn't get any correct responses), perhaps because the train bridge shown in the image no longer exists. It spanned Valley Creek two miles east of Downingtown. The first railroad bridge over Valley Creek was built in 1833 by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania as part of the Philadelphia and Columbia Railroad. It was a covered bridge made of wood containing a single track. It burned down in 1838 from the sparks of a passing locomotive and was rebuilt in a matter of weeks. In 1860 the iron truss bridge seen in the below image was built at this location. This bridge was subsequently replaced in the early 1880s by a stone-arch bridge when the railroad was realigned. Then, in the early 1900s, the entire valley was filled in by a massive earthen fill when the Philadelphia and Thorndale (low-grade line) line was constructed. But before the area was filled in, tunnels were built – for Valley Creek Road and for the creek itself (aka – the “Twin Tunnels”). Several readers thought this was the old iron bridge in Coatesville (the two were very similar). The photographer was Frederick Gutekunst who often included his special photographer's train in his images.



We've identified several features that may help identify the location if you're having trouble picturing it, such as the stone house on Boot Road. The large white building in the image was labeled as a factory in a map from 1873. We are not sure what type of factory it was but may have processed marble from nearby quarries. It was torn down in the late 1800s.



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# Advertisements for Non-Profits

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

The West Caln Historical Society will have a presentation by Matt Bochanski "Banjo Matt" on the History of Banjo in Mummers Parade. It will be held on September 18, 2018 at 7 PM at the West Caln Municipal Building, 721 W. Kings Hwy., Wagontown, PA. The meeting is open and free to the public, and all are welcome and invited.

## ***Sadsbury Township Historical Society***

The Sadsbury Township Historical Society will meet on Monday, September 10<sup>th</sup>, at 7 p.m. in the Sadsbury Township Municipal Building, 2920 Lincoln Highway, Sadsburyville, PA. Our speaker will be Dick Dague, with a Sadsbury Township Book Tour of Historic Sites (based on the Tri-Centennial booklet published in 1982). Visitors are welcome. Doors will open at 6:45 p.m. The meeting will begin at 7 p.m. Admission is free. Light refreshments will be served following the program. For more information, call 717-442-9240.

***Fall 2018 East Brandywine Historical Commission Speakers Series.*** All programs are held at 3:30 p.m. at the East Brandywine Township Building

***Sunday, September 16<sup>th</sup>*** - "Buffalo Bill Cody" presentation by John H. Miecht, a retired Social Studies teach from the Downingtown Area School District. John is also a tour guide with the Brandywine River Museum of Art.

***Sunday, October 21<sup>st</sup>*** - "John Hershey's Vision" presentation by Dale Hendricks, a self described "itinerant preacher on ecology and trees who tries to communicate new ideas, bring the young folks along, and have a little fun." He is the owner of Green Light Plants in Landenberg.

***Sunday, November 18<sup>th</sup>*** - "Historic 1700's Pennsylvania Cooking" presentation by Nancy Bialy Daversa who has worked as a historic consultant for movies and television show, and has been called the "Hollywood Herbalist."

## ***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.

## ***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.

## ***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.

## ***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).

## 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 October 7<sup>th</sup> @ 1:00 PM (we will be closed on the Sunday before Labor Day (September 2<sup>nd</sup>))**
- **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:

- 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

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

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

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### DAHS Board of Directors

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Jordan Staub

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