



Downingtown Area Historical Society *History Notes*

Interesting bits of Downingtown area history

August 9, 2018

Volume 1, Issue 15

The Gallagherville Water Plug (a big headache!)

Situated on the Lancaster Turnpike in Caln Township about halfway between Downingtown and Thorndale was the village of Gallagherville. Named for the local Gallagher family, the village at its peak in the late 1800s consisted of about a dozen homes, two stores, and several other businesses including a hotel. Along with Downingtown, Gallagherville was among the first stations created along the Philadelphia and Columbia Railroad when trains began running in 1834.

Being mid-way between Philadelphia and Lancaster, Downingtown became an important re-fueling location for trains running along the Main Line. In fact, Abraham Lincoln's train taking him to his inauguration in 1861 stopped at Downingtown to refuel with wood and water. Likewise, in 1865 Lincoln's funeral train stopped at Downingtown to refuel as it carried his body back to Illinois. At some point in the 1880s, another water stop was added in the Downingtown area at Gallagherville. South of the village was a small reservoir fed by a stream that flowed into the valley. The reservoir not only provided an ample water supply, but being at a higher location than the railroad tracks, provided sufficient water pressure to quickly top off locomotives.

The device used in Gallagherville to fill the engines was a water plug. These mechanisms were also called water cranes, water spouts, or water columns, and looked and operated like a large sink faucet. It consisted of a tall vertical column with a spout that swiveled over the locomotive's tender to top off the train's water supply. Water plugs such as the one in Gallagherville were often located between tracks so it could be used by trains coming from both directions.
(continued on next page)



Here is an example of a water plug, though probably a bit more modern than the one at Gallagherville. This one is on display at the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania in Strasburg.

After each use it was the responsibility of the train crew to swivel and secure the water plug's spout so it was out of the way of trains that followed. However, this did not always happen, and as a result Gallagherville became a dangerous location for Pennsylvania Railroad train crews on the Main Line. The injuries over a four-year period from a railroader coming into contact with the water plug at Gallagherville included:

May 26, 1887

Joseph Strawbridge was a fireman on a westbound locomotive when he was struck by the water plug at Gallagherville. The train continued on to Lancaster where Strawbridge lived and he was taken to his home to recover from his injuries.

October 13, 1888

George Hamaker from Columbia, Pennsylvania was a fireman on a train that was passing through Gallagherville during the early morning when he stuck his head too far out the cab window and struck the water plug. It caused "an ugly gash...and other bruises."

November 11, 1889

Grant Andrews of Harrisburg was struck in the head while looking out the locomotive's window in the early morning hours and fell to the tracks. He was brought to a home in Gallagherville where his injuries were treated.

November 12, 1889

Samuel Anderson leaned out of the locomotive and struck his head against the water plug. His injuries were not serious "but very painful."

October 31, 1890

Luther Solomon, a brakeman from Harrisburg, was climbing down the side of a train car on a moving train when he hit the water plug at Gallagherville "inflicting severe, internal injuries."

November 11, 1890

Harry Motter of Harrisburg was struck by the water plug and knocked from the cab and taken to his home when the westbound train reached Harrisburg. He was described as "one of the best known firemen on the Pennsylvania Railroad" and was due for a promotion to engineer "to the other side of the engine cab."

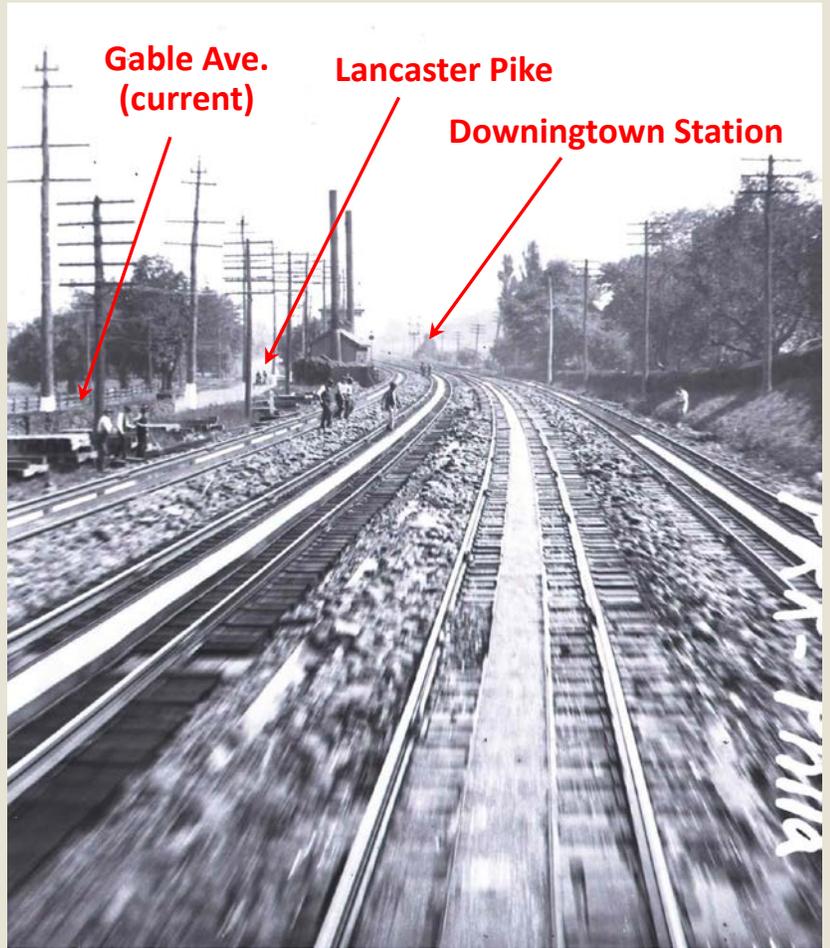
April 4, 1891

Jacob Mateer of Harrisburg received a scalp wound when he stuck his head out the window of the cab and was struck by the water plug.

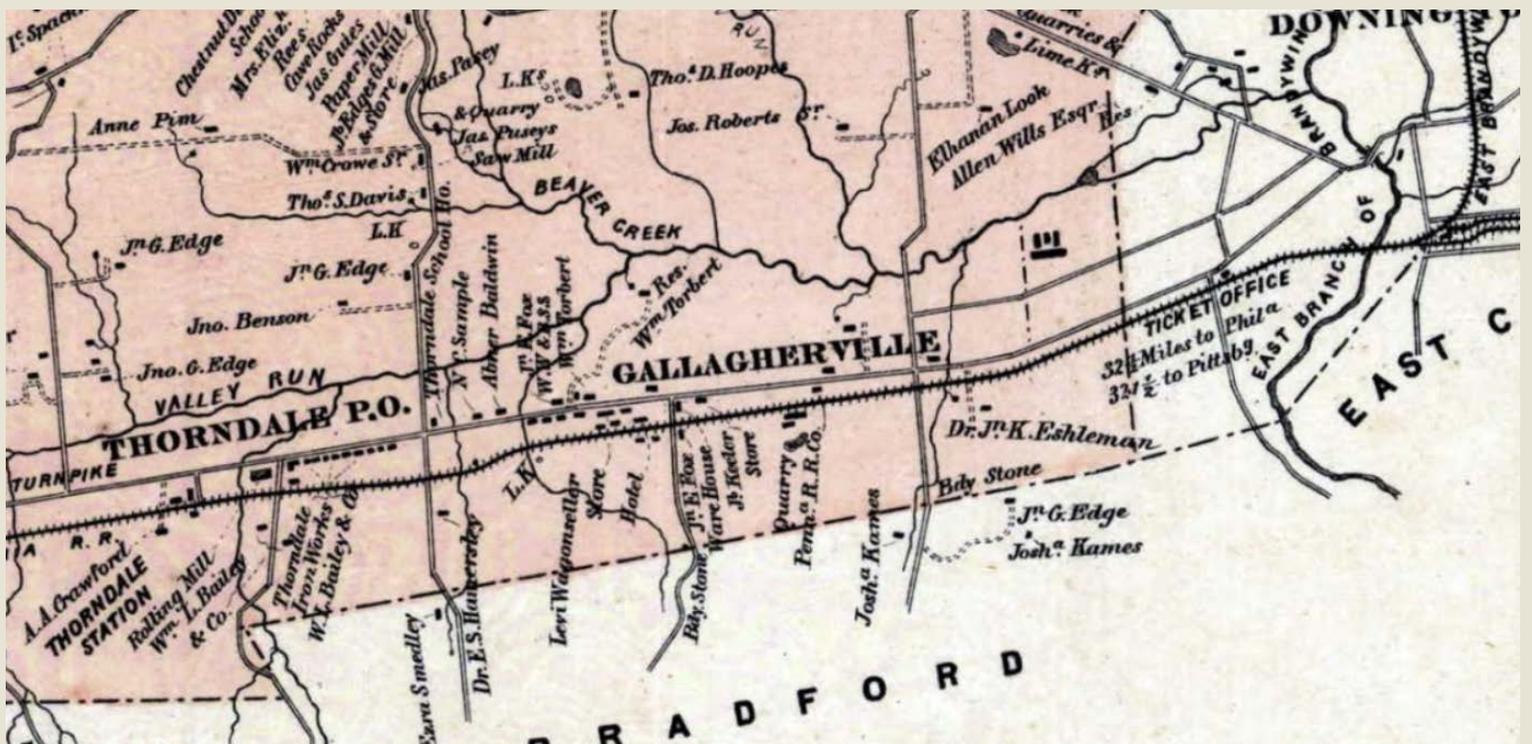
These are the ones we've been able to find at Gallagherville. There were certainly more as some injuries may have been minor and not reported. But the Gallagherville water plug was not alone:

- On July 21, 1883 Pennsylvania Railroad engineer James Brady was hit in the head by a water plug at Radnor, Pennsylvania.
- A Reading locomotive engineer was killed by a water plug on June 3, 1890 at Janney Station between Langhorne and Neshaminy.
- Homer Geisinger, a Pennsylvania Railroad brakeman, was killed in October 1899 when he was hit by a water plug at Thompsettown, Pennsylvania.

The Gallagherville water plug was eventually taken down, not because of the injuries, but because the Pennsylvania Railroad used a much more efficient way to add water to their trains. They used track pans, or troughs, filled with water that were located between the tracks. As locomotives went by a scoop was lowered and the speed of the locomotive forced the water into the tender. As a result, trains could replenish their water supply without stopping.



The photograph above left is a piece of a railroad track pan on display at the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania. The photograph above right (courtesy of the John W. Barriger III National Railroad Library) shows the track pans in Downingtown which were located just west of the Downingtown Station. We've noted on the photograph the Downingtown Station, Lancaster Pike, and where Gabel Avenue currently intersects with Lancaster Avenue. The 1883 map below shows where Gallagherville was situated between Downingtown and Thorndale.



Downingtown Area Vintage Ad



Hop's Hoagie Shop at 121 Washington Avenue preceded Sam's Pizza at the same location. This ad is from 1960.

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

The following article, copied verbatim, appeared in the Philadelphia Public Ledger on December 30, 1850. This event near Coatesville occurred less than a year before the Christiana Riot in Lancaster County where a group of African Americans and white abolitionists skirmished with a party of Maryland slave catchers.

Conflict with fugitive slaves – On Friday last; a gentleman from Maryland, in search of a fugitive slave, accompanied by a Deputy United States Marshal and Constable John Agen, proceeded in a vehicle to the vicinity of Coatesville, on the Columbia Railroad, where it was understood the fugitive was secreted. They arrived in the neighborhood of the house in question about 2 o'clock in the morning, and roused the inmates by asking for a light to mend their vehicle, which they pretended were broken. A colored woman came to the door, when the officers rushed into the house and commenced the search. The owner recognized his slave, but the other colored persons in the house interfered, and, arming themselves with axes and fire-arms, succeeded in enabling the fugitive to escape. They also assaulted the officers, who were, in self-defense, forced to use their pistols, and it is believed several of the colored persons were wounded. The slave owner recognized among the men in the house several that he knew to be slaves that have recently escaped from plantations in the neighborhood of his own.

Downingtown Area Group Photo



Rich Weaver sent us this photograph of his 1959-1960 kindergarten class that at the time met in the basement of the Downingtown Baptist Church at the corner of Lancaster and Manor Avenues. Rich was able to identify a few of his classmates. From left to right:

Bottom row: #4 – Patty Foy

Second row: #1 – Steve Massimini, #4 – Ned Beamesderfer, #5 – Nancy McDonald, #7 – Steve Singer, #8 – Robbie Childs, #9 – Dave Kipp

Third row: #3 – Rich Weaver, #6 – Eddie Campbell, #9 – Mark Dreibelbis

Top row: #1 – Sandy Piersol, #3 – Mark Mento, #4 – Diane Pederman, #8 – Sharon Charles, Teacher – Ms. Detry

Downingtown Area Date Stone

This issue's date stone is 1954 which was the year of the groundbreaking and construction of St. Joseph's school on Pennsylvania Avenue (below right). Last year we featured the groundbreaking in our "Then & Now" series:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lvJQfGe3YJO>



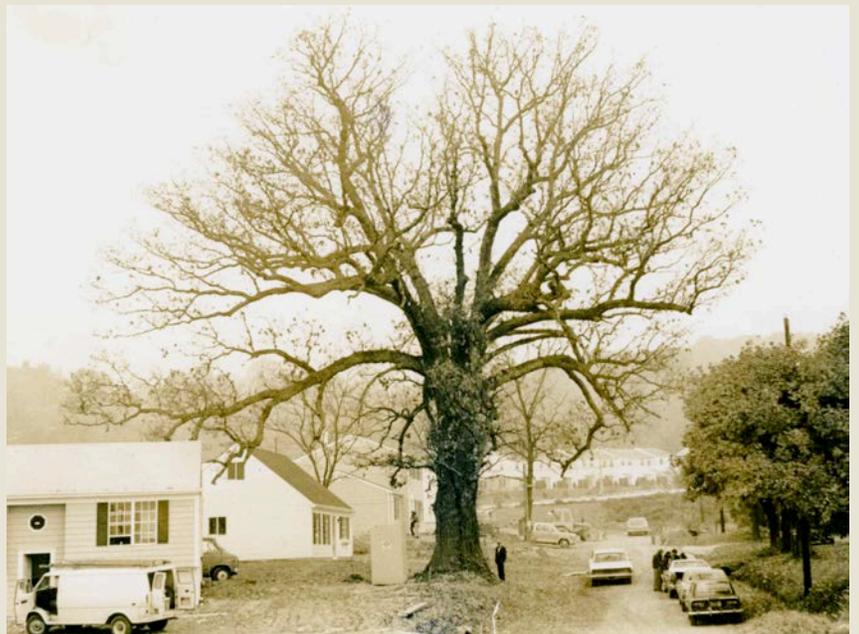
Downingtown Area Mystery Pic

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. Unfortunately we may get so many responses we aren't able to respond to each one individually. Sorry!



Last Issue's Mystery Pic

Greg Nelms is truly a perceptive scholar because he was the first to identify the location as Old Lionville Road/Old Route 113 in a photograph taken from Farmhouse Road around 1974. The tree is a Penn Oak, meaning it was growing when William Penn founded the colony in 1681. The Norwood House apartments can be seen in the background on the other side of the Route 30 Bypass.



Come out to our Civil War Day at the Downingtown Area Historical Society

**Visit Private Dague's campsite and learn about the
Minquas cannon.**

**Meet Ann Downing and hear her story about the history
of Downingtown's name and the Ashbridge House.**

**Explore artifacts from Downingtown throughout the
main floor of the Ashbridge House.**

**Meet award winning author and newspaper reporter,
Bruce Mowday, and learn about his new book *J. Howard
Wert's Gettysburg.***

**Hear about President Lincoln's Inauguration and
Funeral Train Route through Downingtown**

DATE & TIME: AUGUST 19, 2018 – 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM

**LOCATION: ASHBRIDGE HOUSE, 849 EAST LANCASTER AVENUE in DOWNINGTOWN
(NEXT TO CHICK-FIL-A)**

CALL OR EMAIL FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

[info @ downingtownareahistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@downingtownareahistoricalsociety.org) (610) 269-1709

Advertisements for Non-Profits

Alert Fire Company

Alert Fire Company will host its annual chicken bar-b-que on Saturday, August 18, 2018 from 4pm to 7pm at 122 West Pennsylvania Avenue in Downingtown. Complete dinner for a donation of \$13.00. Eat in or Take-Out.

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. Sickle St. Kennett Square, PA 19348). Meetings are free and all are welcome. Check 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/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.

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/. 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>

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 September 2nd @ 1:00 PM
- **The first Tuesday of the month, 6:30-8:00 PM (with pizza!)**
Next one September 4th @ 6:30 PM

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!



Downingtown Area Historical Society

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610-269-1709

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www.downingtownareahistoricalociety.org

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Follow us on Twitter:



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



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