



Downingtown Area Historical Society *History Notes*

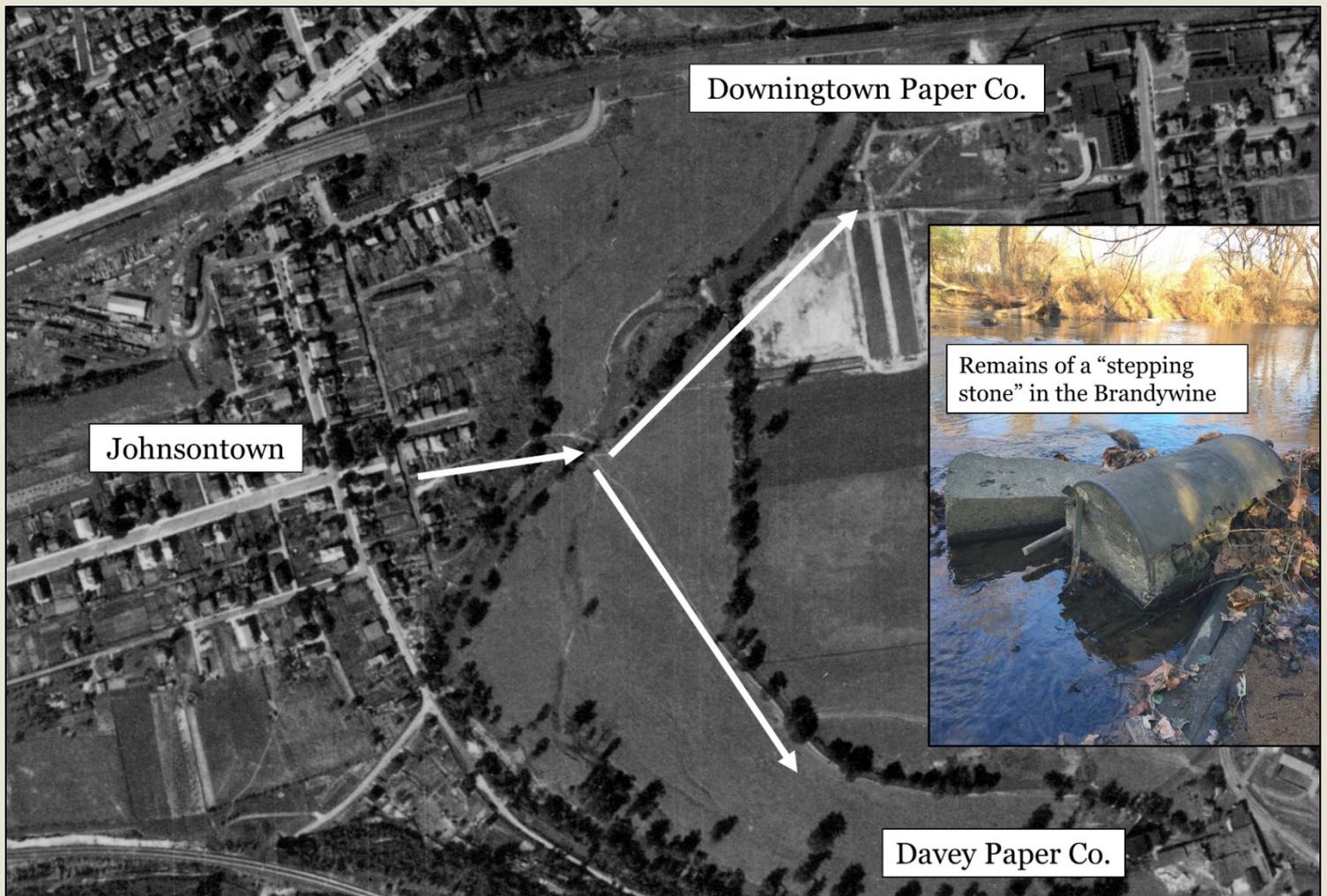
Interesting bits of Downingtown area history

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The Brandywine River “Stepping Stones”

Downingtown’s paper mills were a major source of employment in the early-to-mid 20th century, especially for workers in the Johnstontown section of the Borough. In 1940 for example, nearly half of the 270 male workers living in Johnstontown were employed in the paper-making industry. Most walked to work, but walking on the roads could add significant time to an already long and physically demanding work day. To create a short cut to two of the mills, Johnstontown mill workers constructed “stepping stones” across the Brandywine. Each “stone” was a fifty-gallon drum filled with stones or concrete to weigh it down in the fast-moving water. Crossing the river would require jumping from one stone to another. (continued on next page)



This 1937 aerial photograph shows the route from Johnstown to the mills. Workers would follow a path from St. Joseph's Alley down to the Brandywine to the stepping stones where they would jump across the river. On the other side of the river the path split. The left path went northeast to the Downingtown Paper Company. The right path went south to the Davey Paper Company by the trestle bridge. The paper industry is long gone from Downingtown, but many vestiges remain, including re-used buildings, foundations, smokestacks, and one rusting 50-gallon drum in the Brandywine River.

Downingtown Mystery Pic



Do you know where this picture was taken?

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

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

1873 – Downingtown's Borough Council, in order to attract manufacturers, resolved to exempt all new businesses from local real estate taxes for three years. Later in the year one newspaper wrote that "money and work are reported plentiful in Downingtown."

1894 – Thomas Dugan was once a prosperous Philadelphia business owner, but now lived in poverty in Downingtown. On December 12th of this year, he got a surprise visit from a Philadelphia priest who took the train to Downingtown and handed Dugan a package containing \$300. The money came from a man who burglarized Dugan's business 22 years before and on his death-bed gave the priest the money to give to Dugan.

1896 – A number of young Downingtown men got together in February of this year and organized the Downingtown Banjo Club.

1906 – A locomotive got loose from a freight siding and rolled onto the Main Line in Glen Loch. It travelled unmanned ten miles west to Downingtown where it crashed into a caboose and two other locomotives. Fortunately, no one was hurt but the caboose and the locomotives were destroyed.

1921 – For the third time in three months, the home of Mrs. William Clark on Brandywine Avenue was robbed on February 17th. This last time the robber stole a purse containing \$25 that was under the pillow Mrs. Clark's aunt was sleeping on.

1923 – Jack Ryan, the new owner of the Swan Hotel, broke up a Ku Klux Klan rally in Downingtown the night of April 17th. When a ten foot high cross was set ablaze in the business section of town, Ryan came out of the hotel to see what was going on. "This is going too far," he said, and went over and pulled down the cross. "You ought to have your Mother Hubbards pulled off for cutting up like this," he told the embarrassed Klansmen. He added, "if you want to have an oyster roast or fish fry go out of town and have it. Don't clutter up our main street."

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At Shellmire Station.

Downingtown Vintage Ad

Thomas B. Carpenter was a blacksmith who lived at 26 Brandywine Avenue in Downingtown at the turn of the twentieth century. His shop was located at Shellmire Station which was the first stop on the Downingtown and Lancaster Railroad as it headed north, about where Georgio's restaurant is now located.

In this 1897 advertisement he is identified as a "farrier." Many blacksmiths were also farrier's which is a specialized skill not only involving the shaping and fitting of horseshoes, but also the ability to shape, clean, and trim horse's hooves.

Downingtown Group Photo

This photo was taken in 1961 inside the Downingtown Iron Works which was located on the northeast corner of Pennsylvania and Wallace Avenues, where Rite Aid is now located.

The man in the center is Joe McConaghy, Sr. In fact, it was Joe who saved a date stone from the 1864 Downingtown Public School. The stone was located (probably in storage) in the old West Ward School on Lancaster Avenue and Joe asked if he could keep it when the school was torn down in 1958. Joe's son, Joe McConaghy, Jr., recently donated the stone to the Historical Society where it is on display at the Ashbridge House. We do not know who the other two men are, but if you do please let us know!



Downingtown Date Stone

This issue's date stone ("PRR 1873") can be seen on the north side of the short, stone arch railroad tunnel on Viaduct Avenue as you drive into Johnstown. In 1873, the Pennsylvania Railroad closed the crossing over the tracks on Bradford Avenue where it intersected Lancaster Avenue and built a new entryway to the southwest section of Downingtown via the tunnel. In fact, if you look closely as you drive through the tunnel, you can see a change in the stone work mid way. The tunnel was extended on the south side in the early 1890s when the railroad added two additional tracks.

Advertisements for Non-Profits

Marshallton United Methodist Church Anniversary

On Sunday, January 14, 2018 at the 10:30 AM worship service, Marshallton United Methodist Church, 1282 W. Strasburg Rd, West Chester will celebrate the 190th anniversary of becoming an "established church" in 1828 . Bishop Peggy Johnson of the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference will deliver the message entitled, The Body of Christ at 190 and Going Strong. When the current sanctuary was rebuilt in 1891, the church was named Inskip Methodist Episcopal Church after the first president of the United States National Holiness Association. John S. Inskip was converted during a revival in Marshallton in 1932. Following the service, the celebration will continue with a luncheon. The service will also honor the 100th birthday of the congregation's senior member, Evelyn Fair.

Farmers Market

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

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. Gluten-free options are available. 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.

Senior Center Programs & Activities

You'll find information about the Downingtown Area Senior Center programs and activities at: www.downingtownseniors.org

Lyme Disease

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 third Wednesday of every month at 7 PM at the Kennett Friends Meeting House on Route 82 (125 W. Sickie St. Kennett Square). Meetings are free and all are welcome. Check www.lymepa.org for directions and program information.

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>

Banquet Room for rent

The Downingtown (Williamson) Masonic Lodge, a non-profit organization located at 210 Manor Ave. has a Banquet Room for rent. The area is perfect for parties of up to 80 people and has a full kitchen. Rental fees are reasonable. Call 610-269-3555 for more information.

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.

Check Out Our Latest “Then & Now” Photo Sequences

You can see all of the “Then & Now” morphed photo sequences of local historic sites via [YouTube](#).

Clipping Events

Did you know that as part of our archival collection we have nearly 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**
- **The first Tuesday of the month, 6:30-8:00 PM (with pizza!)**

Please check future issues of History Notes or our Facebook page for exact time and dates.

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)

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

www.downingtownareahistoricalociety.org

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



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