



# Downingtown Area Historical Society *History Notes*

Interesting bits of Downingtown area history

December 13, 2018

Volume 1, Issue 23

## Sugars Bridge

The Mystery Pic from our last issue had many good guesses but only two were correct. **Joe Moser** is truly a perceptive scholar because he was the first to correctly identify the structure as the old Sugars Bridge. Sugars Bridge was located near what is now the intersection of Route 322 and Sugars Bridge Road. It crossed the Brandywine River a short distance north of the current Route 322 bridge (that will soon be replaced). The bridge and the surrounding area has some interesting history so we thought we would highlight some of it in this issue. **Al Giannantonio** also guessed the correct location and some of the historic information was provided by him.

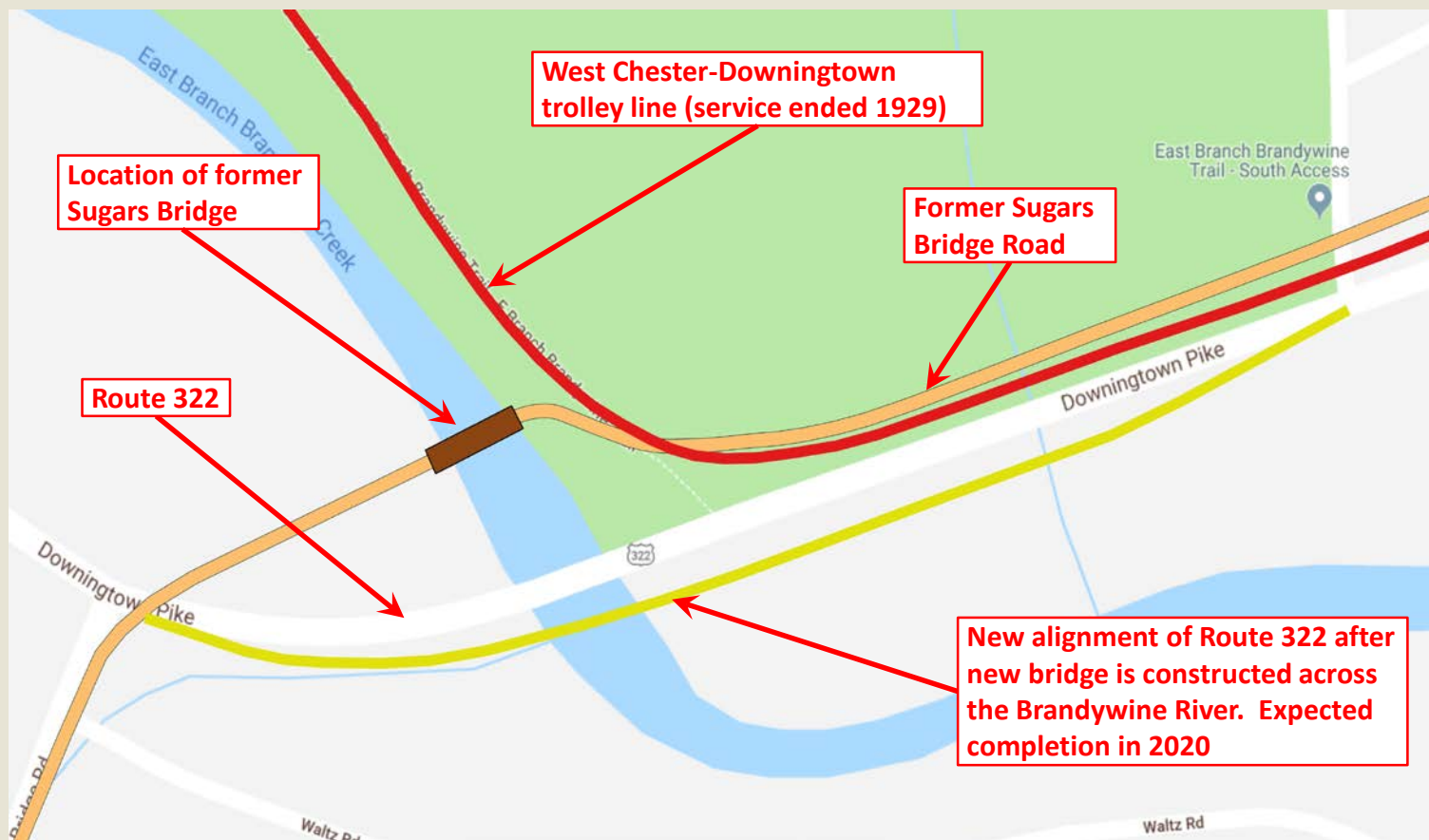


Sugars Bridge was built in 1850 and was named for William Sugar who farmed on the western side of the Brandywine River near the bridge. The span connected East Bradford and West Bradford Townships. The bridge was 120 feet long with an inside width of 16 feet. It was built at a cost of \$2,080. It was the third covered bridge along the Brandywine heading south out of Downingtown. The first was Kerr's Bridge and the second was Gibson's Bridge (which still stands at Harmony Hill Road).

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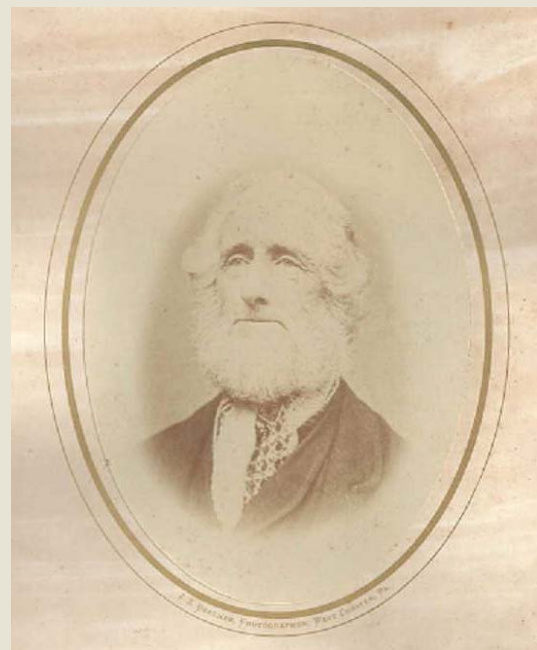
The area along the Brandywine River near Sugars Bridge was especially beautiful and was a popular camping and picnicking spot for Downingtowners. On the east side of the bridge Joseph Huddleston owned and operated a blacksmith and wheelwright shop for many years. In fact, when Huddleston became the local postmaster in 1891 he moved the Talcose Post Office which was on Harmony Hill Road to Sugars Bridge and changed the Post Office's name to Osney, but the change was short-lived. The West Chester-Downingtown trolley ran right past the bridge with a designated stop called Sugars Bridge.

The map below shows the area around Sugars Bridge.



In 1929 Route 322 (then Route 5) was completed between Downingtown and West Chester and included a new steel bridge a short distance south of Sugars Bridge. The old Sugars Bridge had lasted over 80 years when the County sold the bridge for its lumber in 1932.

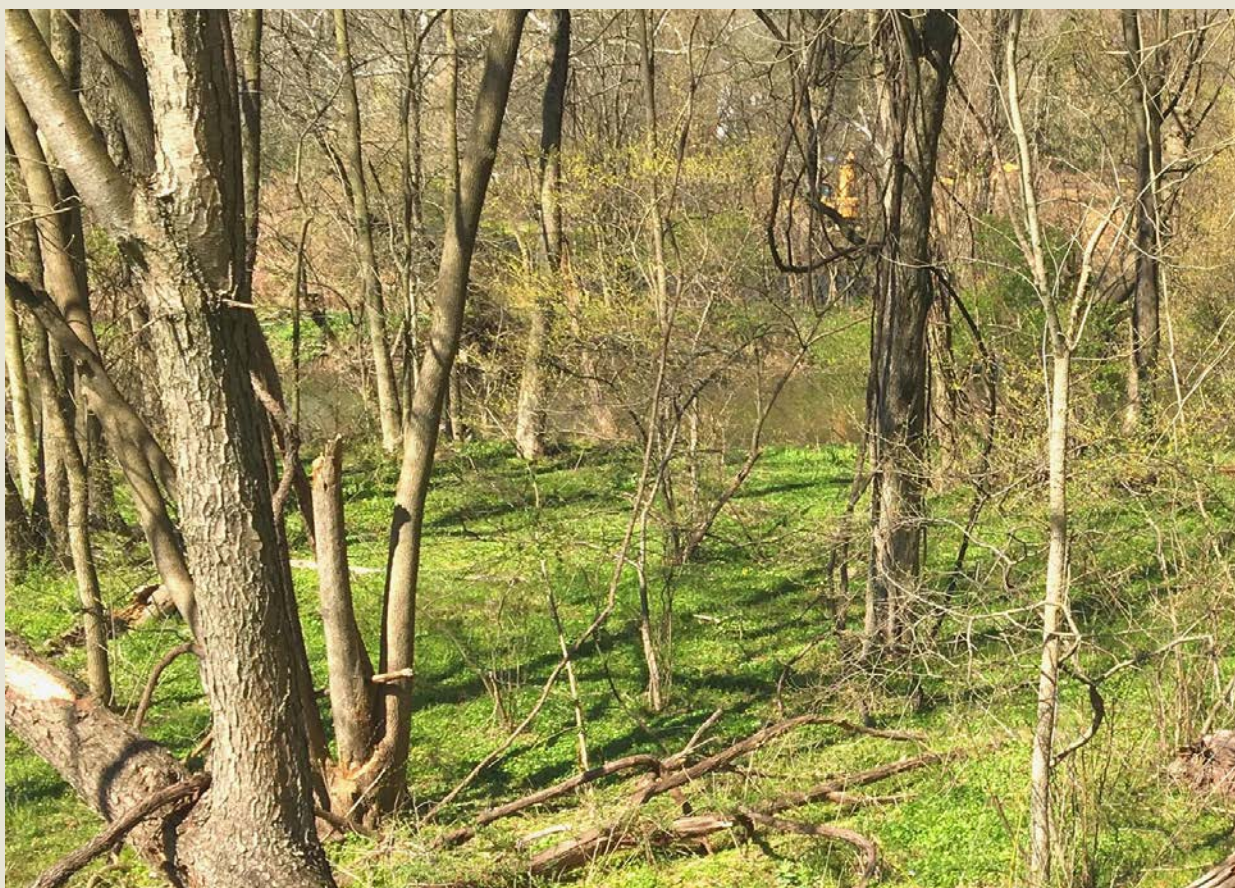
William Sugar (right) operated a farm on the western side of the Brandywine River in West Bradford Township. The crossing was at first known as Sugars Ford and then Sugars Bridge when the span was built in 1850. In the 1880s Sugar moved with his family to Kansas where he died in 1897.



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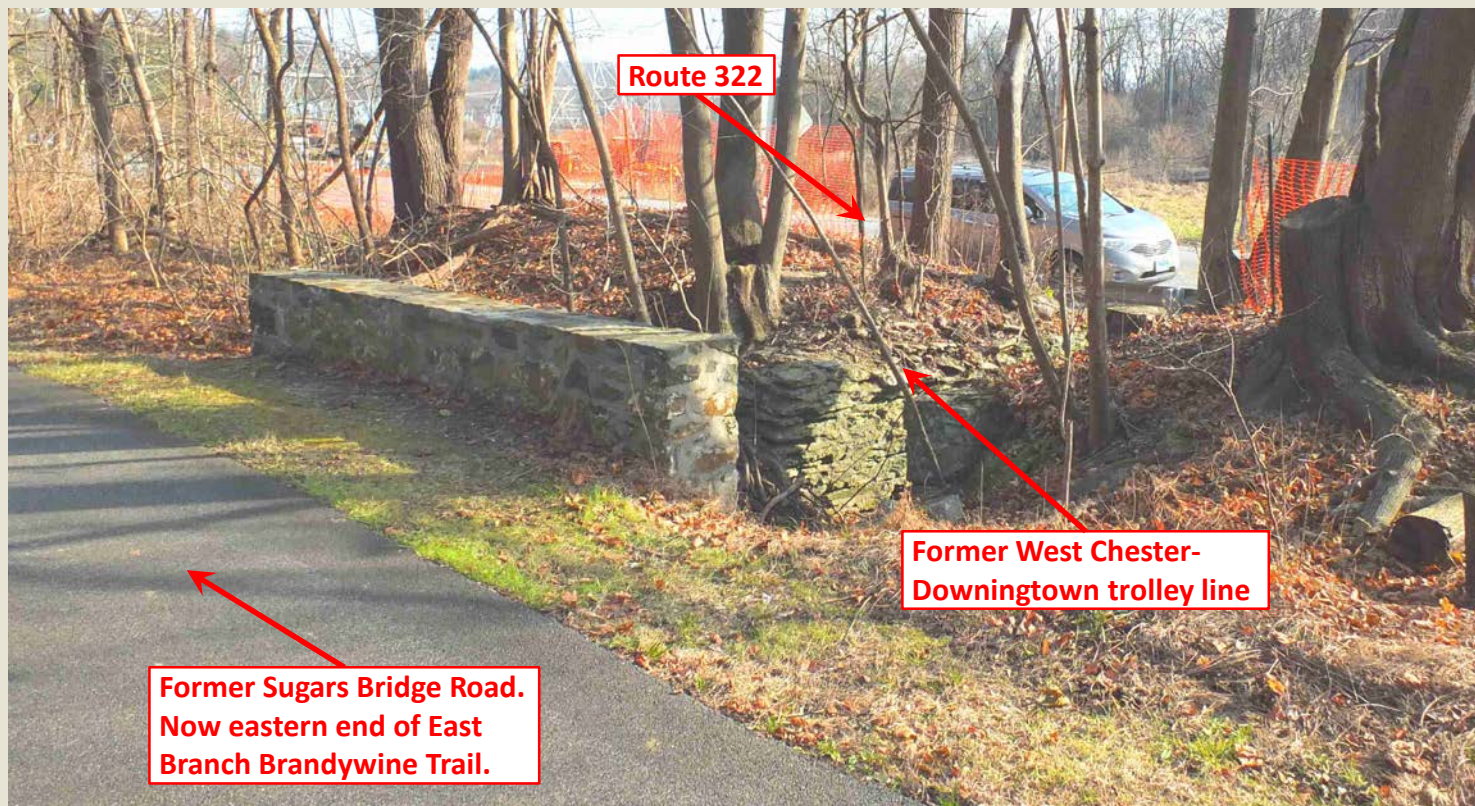
Below, the top image is of Sugars Bridge (courtesy of the Hagley Museum) and was our Mystery Pic in our last issue of History Notes. The photograph was taken by Frank Zebley in 1930. Mr. Zebley was most likely standing just a few feet off the tracks of the former West Chester-Downingtown trolley line in order to photograph the eastern entrance to the bridge. Across the bridge, Route 322 (then known as Route 5) had just been completed and as a result the covered bridge's days were numbered. Below this is how the same scene looks today.



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If you ever walked on the eastern end of the East Branch Brandywine Trail by Skelp Level Road you will no doubt have noticed crossing a small stone bridge (below). This was not part of the old West Chester-Downingtown Trolley line but was a continuation of Sugars Bridge Road on the eastern side of Sugars Bridge. The trolley line ran parallel to and just a few feet south of this road. When Route 322 was completed in 1929 it made this road obsolete.



Frank Zebley returned to the area in 1933 and captured the image below (courtesy of the Hagley Museum). It faces north and was taken from the Route 322 steel bridge. Sugars Bridge was taken down the previous year but the stone abutments were still in place.



# Luminaria Supplies Still Available!

Luminaria supplies are still available but you must act fast so we can make them available to you before the holidays.

Orders can be made individually to the coordinator, Carol Grigson, at 610-269-5413 or via email at [dths1709@gmail.com](mailto:dths1709@gmail.com). Prices remain the same: 75 cents for each candle and bag, and 75 cents for each plastic base.

Pickup of orders will be available at the Ashbridge House, our headquarters next to the Chick-Fil-A Restaurant on Route 30 in East Caln, on Sunday, December 16, 1-3 pm or we can arrange a different pickup time at a later date.





## 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).

**Do you have an old photograph taken in the Downingtown area that you think might stump your fellow readers as to its location? We would love to include it as a Mystery Pic if you wish to share it. Contact us at [dahs19335@gmail.com](mailto:dahs19335@gmail.com).**



## Downingtown Vintage Ad

Swarner's Restaurant was located at 10 Wallace Avenue. This advertisement was from 1961. The image below shows the restaurant's sign from 1971.



**GOOD HOME COOKING  
WITH THE CHEF'S TOUCH!**

**Swarner's**

**RESTAURANT**

FRESH SEA FOOD  
OYSTERS & CLAMS  
Daily 7 AM 8 PM  
Closed Sun.  
Air Conditioned

**AN 9-1289**

10 WALLACE AV.  
DOWNINGTOWN, PA.

ORDERS  
TO TAKE  
OUT

Polly Swarner

## Downingtown Did-You-Know?

This is not necessarily specific to the Downingtown area, but did you know that in 1923 the Pennsylvania Legislature established the “State Geographic Board” which decided upon the official spellings of geographic features that would appear on state and federal maps? The Board also had the task of dealing with the duplication of place names all over Pennsylvania which was described as “a nightmare to the map student.”

Early on the Board was inundated with requests from all across the State to establish official names or spellings of streams, mountains, hills, townships, and even counties. For example, a major decision by the Board was to officially name Centre County, affirming it should end in “re” and not “er” as was a common spelling back then. Closer to home in Chester County, in late 1924 the board established the official spelling of Uwchlan Township, not “Uwchland”.

The Geographic Board also expressed their preference for the state abbreviation as “Pa.” or “Penna.” rather than “Penn.” In one of their meetings the Board also voted to drop the apostrophe from place names ending in “s”. “Cooper’s Run”, for example, would be “Coopers Run” from then on. But in some cases, the Board refused to take up an official name by acquiescing to local preference, such as whether Berks County residents wished to spell the Borough of Kutztown as “Cootztown.”

At first, the Pennsylvania State Geographic Board met monthly in Harrisburg. But as official names and spellings of geographic features were sorted out, the Board needed to meet less often. Sometimes it would be years between meetings.

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## Downingtown Area Group Photo



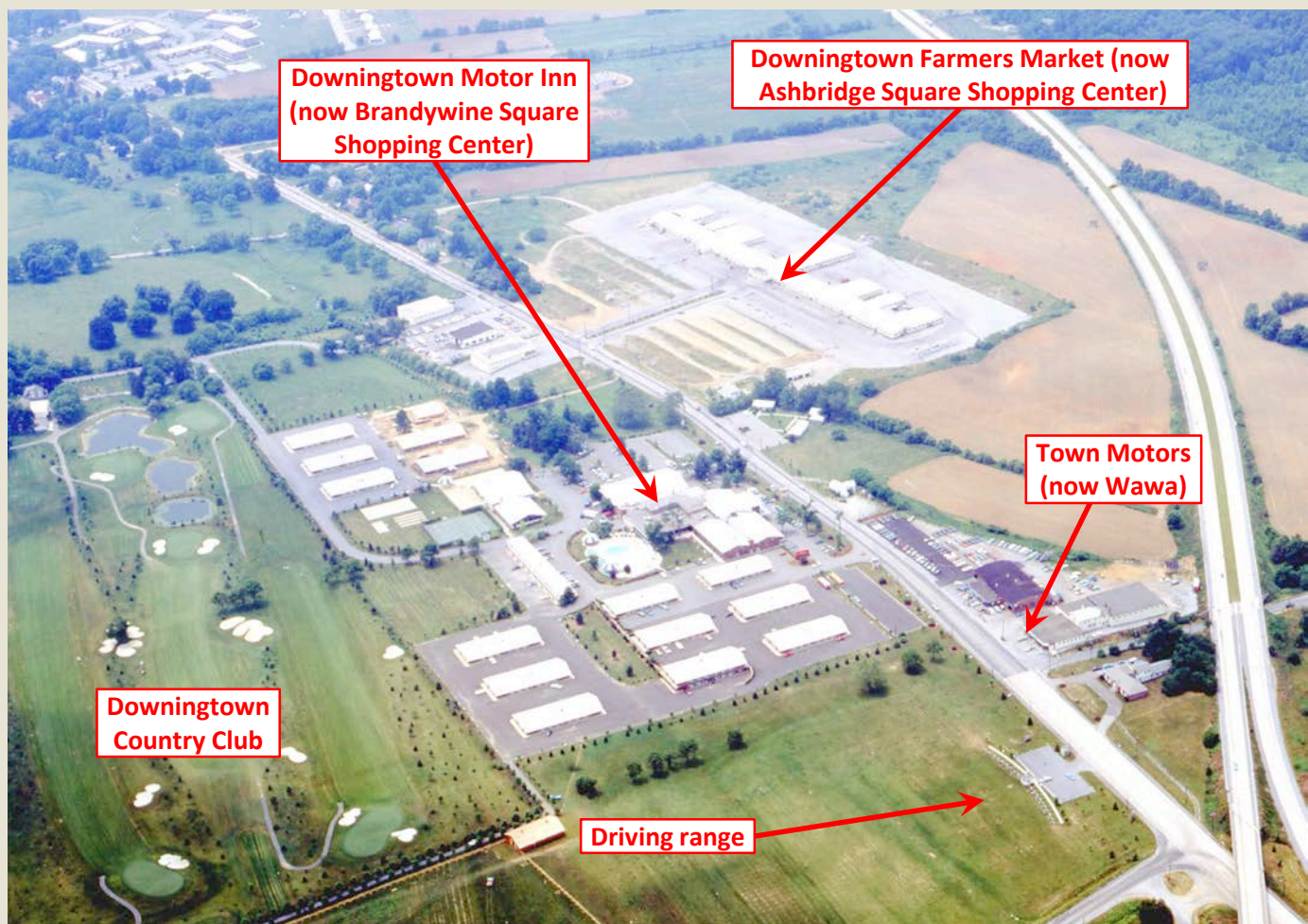
This photograph was provided by Ed Hill and shows a baseball team from Exton ca. 1920.

Front row left to right: Joe Hill, Chad Campbell, Ches Trout, Clyde Reese, George Baldwin  
Back row left to right: T. Brogan, J. Whitely, Bill Dague, Jack Hughes, Chas Hill

Chas Hill was Ed’s father and Joe Hill was his uncle. Ed also mentioned that Clyde Reese’s son Earl owned the Ingleside Diner at one point.



# Downingtown Area From Above



This photograph was taken along Route 30 east of Downingtown in 1971. Many of the buildings and other features seen here are long gone.

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

**1877** – According to one newspaper “there is a chicken in Downingtown that had its leg broken by an unlucky blow. Its owner, thinking it a shame to kill it on account of the wound, carefully reset and bandaged the break. The result was that the bones knit, the leg grew strong again, and with the exception of a slight limp the chicken is itself once more.”

**1879** – Fox hunting by moonlight was greatly encouraged by farmers in Wallace and Upper Uwchlan Townships because it diverted the animals’ attention from their poultry.

**1894** – During the summer a chicken with four legs was hatched on the farm of Samuel Feters in West Pikeland Township.

**1921** – In January, the borough council of Phoenixville asked the borough council of Downingtown to cooperate in enacting the daylight savings rule in Chester County for the following summer. Phoenixville approved the measure and also asked West Chester for their approval as well.

**1924** – On March 5, a Parkesburg-based wreck train used to clean up wrecks along the Main Line derailed near Coatesville. Word was then sent to Paoli for assistance where another wreck train was based. However, this Paoli-based train wrecked in Downingtown when an axle broke. The Parkesburg train was able to re-rail itself and then came to the rescue of the Paoli train in Downingtown. The headline read: “Wreck Train Wrecked On Way To Wreck Of Another Wreck Train.”



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# Advertisements for Non-Profits

## ***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 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/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 January 6<sup>th</sup> @ 1:00 PM**
- **The first Tuesday of the month, 6:30-8:00 PM (with pizza!)**  
**Next one January 8<sup>th</sup> @ 6:30 PM (there will be no Tuesday night clipping in December)**

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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)
- 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!



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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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Follow us on Twitter:



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



### DAHS Board of Directors

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