



Downingtown Area Historical Society *History Notes*

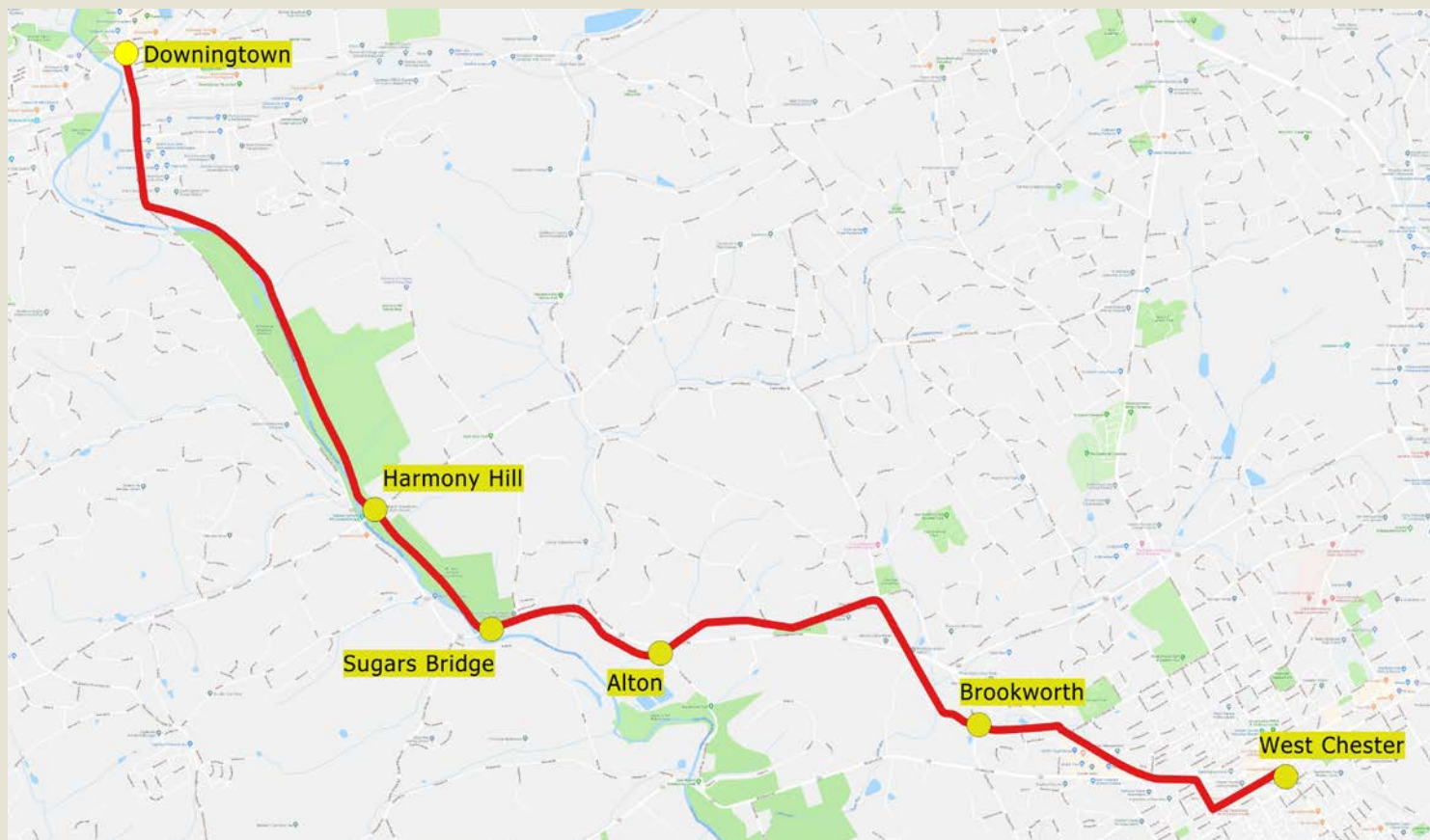
Interesting bits of Downingtown area history

May 23, 2019

Volume 2, Issue 10

Tracing the Trolley Line – Part 2

In the last issue of *History Notes* we started to trace the line of the trolley that ran between West Chester and Downingtown from 1902 to 1929 (we again include a map below showing the line). We covered two sections in the last issue (West Chester to Brookworth and Brookworth to Alton). In this issue we will cover two more sections, and then conclude with the final section in our next issue.

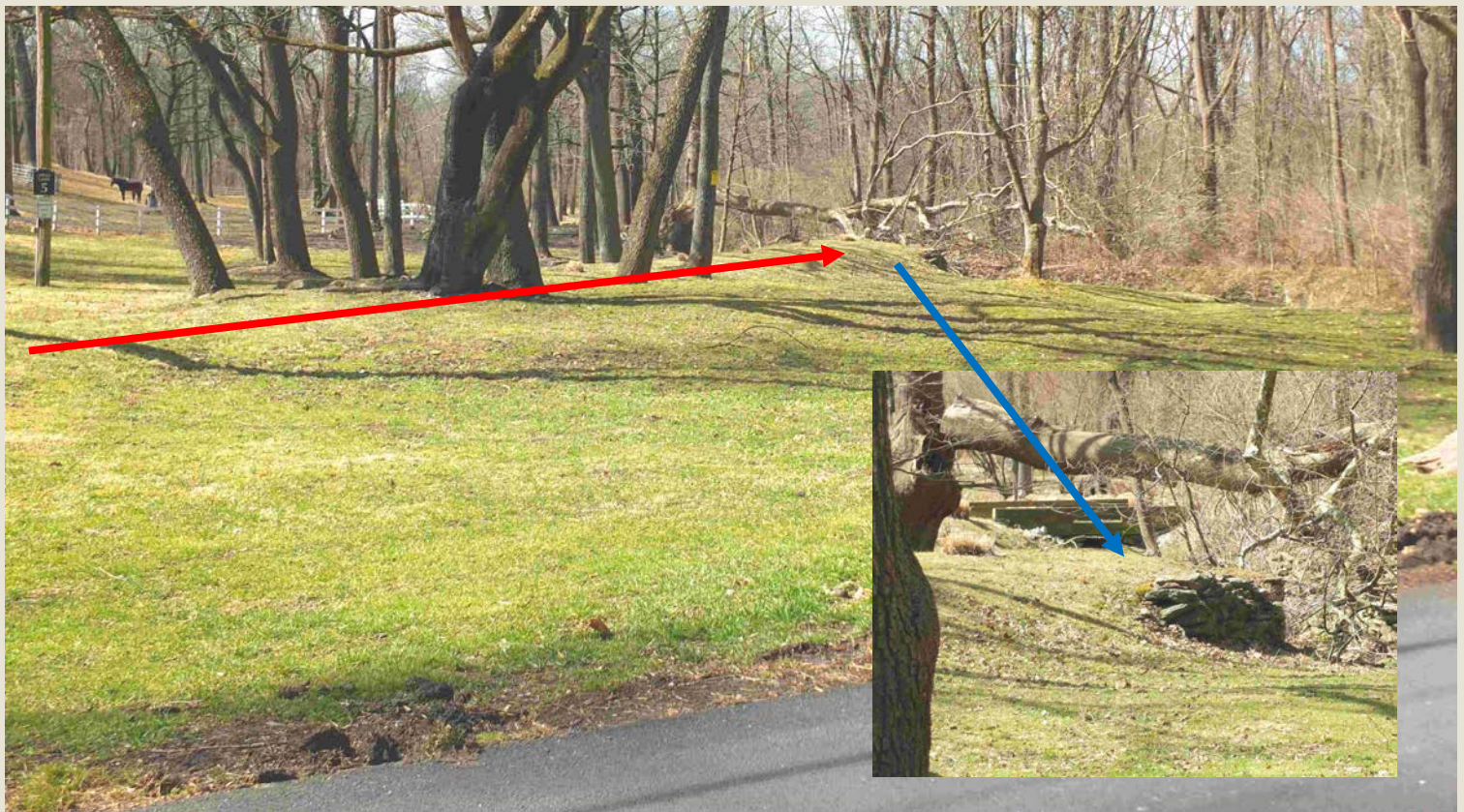
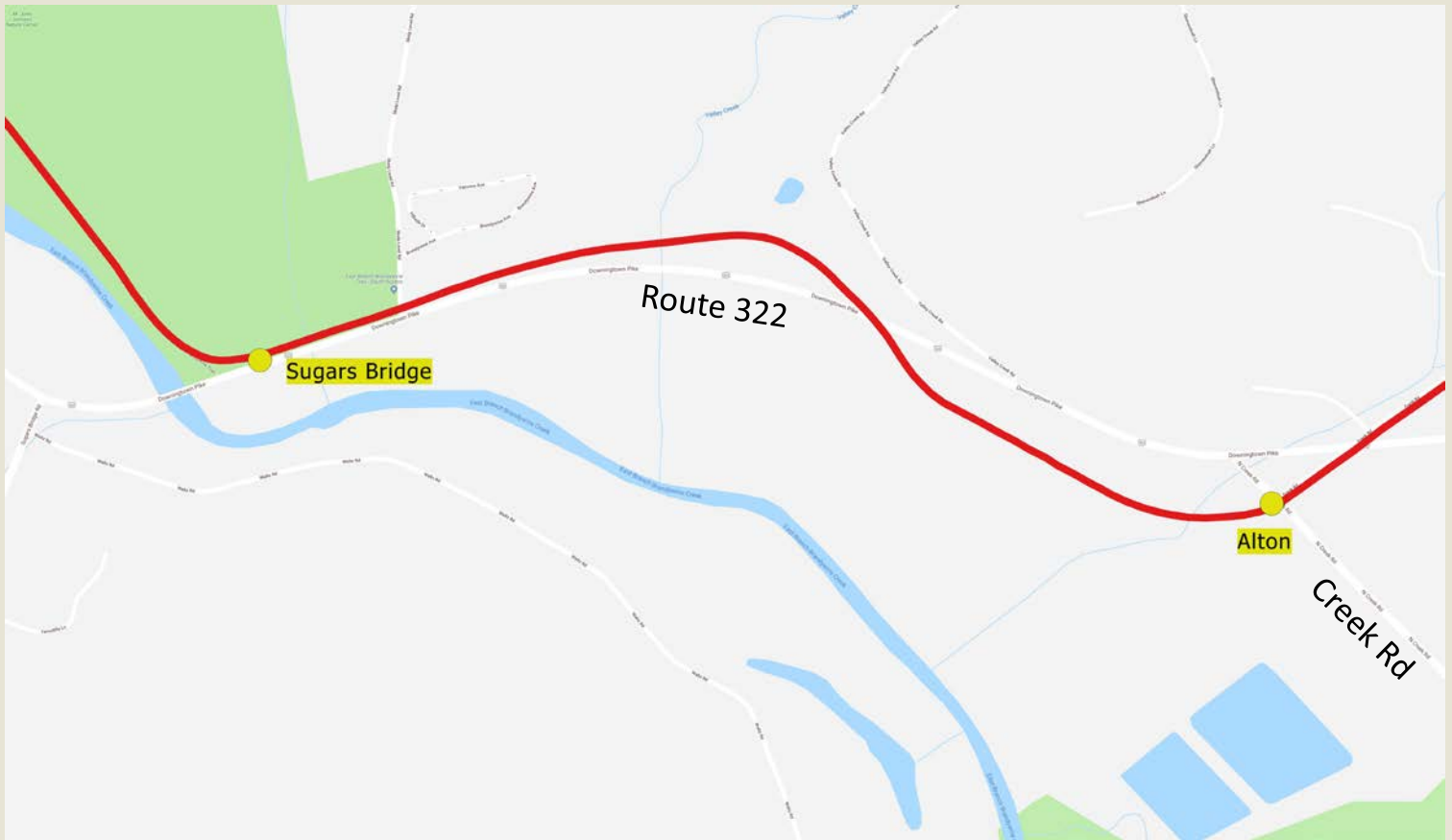


The current Google map above shows the route of the old West Chester-Downingtown trolley line.

Alton was the second stop from West Chester along the trolley line. It was the name of the farm owned at the time by Elizabeth C. Johnson located near the intersection of what is now Frank Road, Creek Road, and Route 322 (Route 322 wasn't built until the late 1920s). Similar to Brookworth, there were a few scattered farms and homes at Alton.

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The map below shows the trolley route between Alton and Sugars Bridge on a modern Google map (we apologize for the small road labels on the Google map). The image at the bottom was taken on Creek Road looking west, where during the winter months, the old trolley road bed is clearly discernable. The inset image shows the remains of a small bridge that crossed a tributary of the Brandywine Creek at that location.



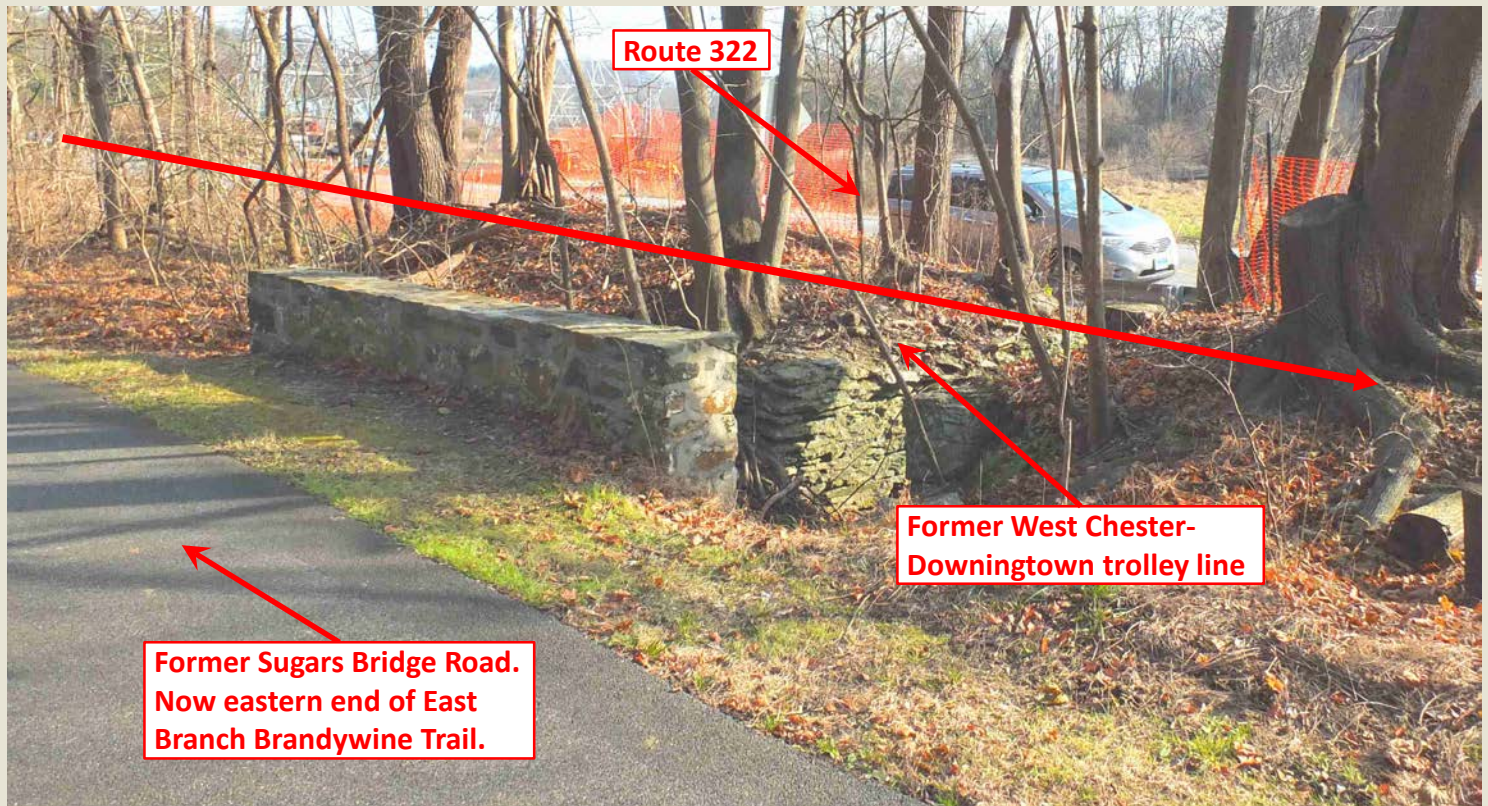
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A short distance west of Alton the trolley line can be seen along Route 322. It's hard to discern in the top image below (it's much easier to see in person) but the raised ground on this land was the road bed for the trolley line. We cheated a little and are using an image from Google Street View. It was much safer than trying to take our own picture at this location! The images at the bottom were taken a bit further on. This might be the only remaining intact bridge along the trolley line and is much easier to see from Route 322 during the winter months.

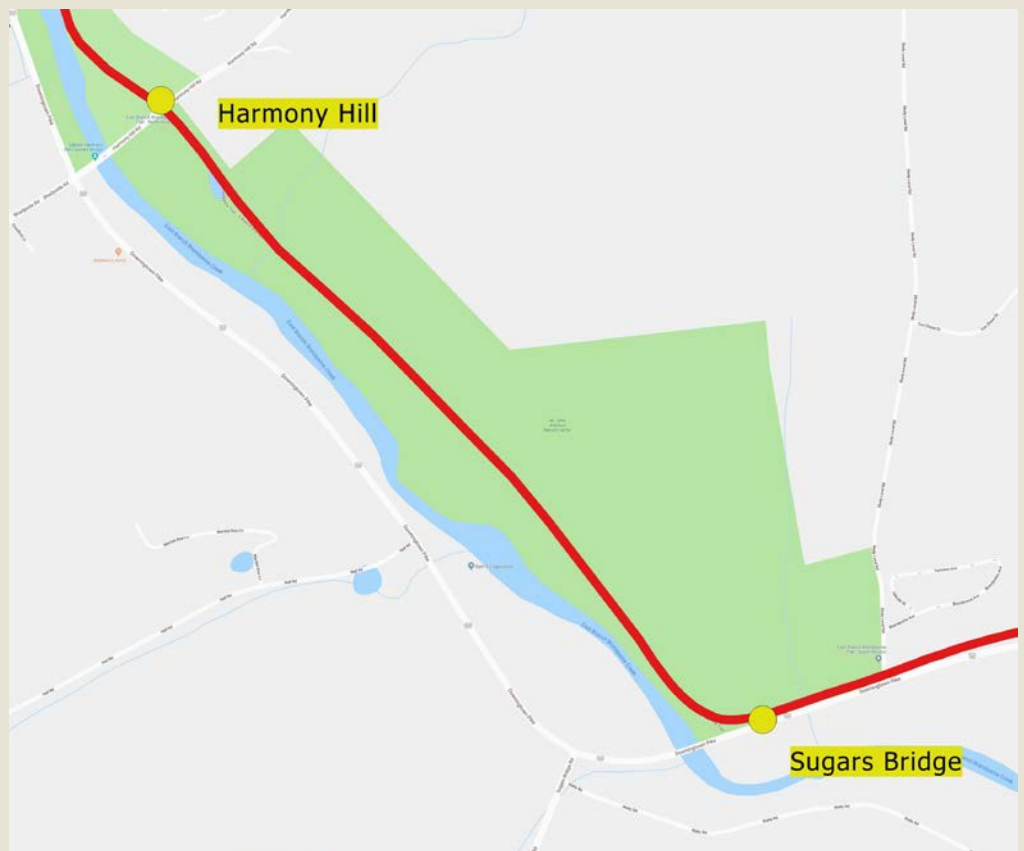


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We included the image below in our article on the Sugars Bridge area ([Volume 1, Issue 23 on 12/23/18](#)). On the eastern end of the East Branch Brandywine Trail the near the Skelp Level Road parking area is a small stone bridge that crosses a tributary to the Brandywine Creek. The part of the trail that crosses this bridge is not on the old trolley bed. This was actually the continuation of Sugars Bridge Road that crossed the Brandywine on a covered bridge that was dismantled in the early 1930s after Route 322 was completed (in 1929). The trolley line ran parallel to and just a few feet south of this road.

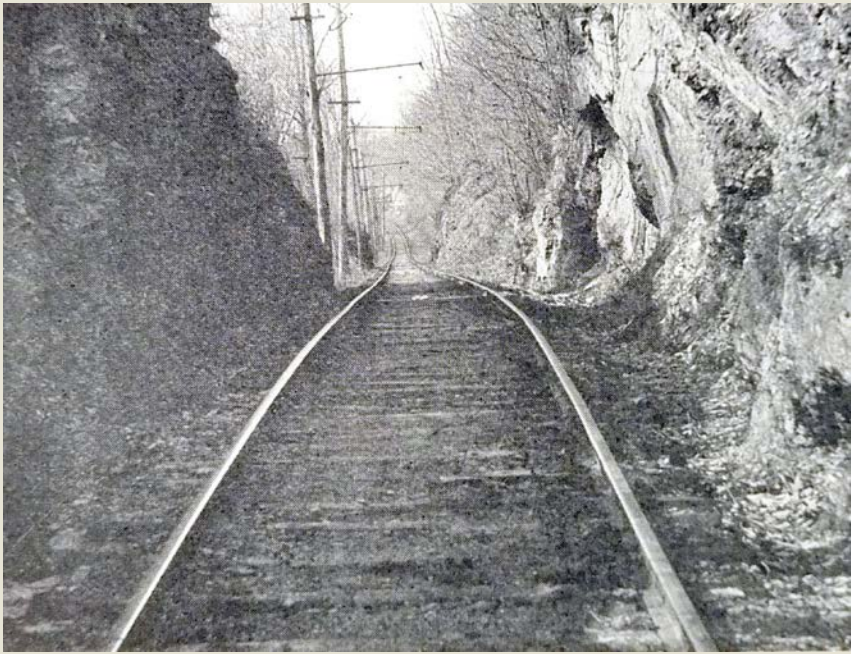


The Sugars Bridge trolley station was located a short distance west of Skelp Level Road right before the line took a sharp turn to the northwest (right). Virtually the entire former trolley line between Sugars Bridge and Harmony Hills Road is now the East Branch Brandywine Trail which passes through the M. John Johnson Nature Area of East Bradford Township.

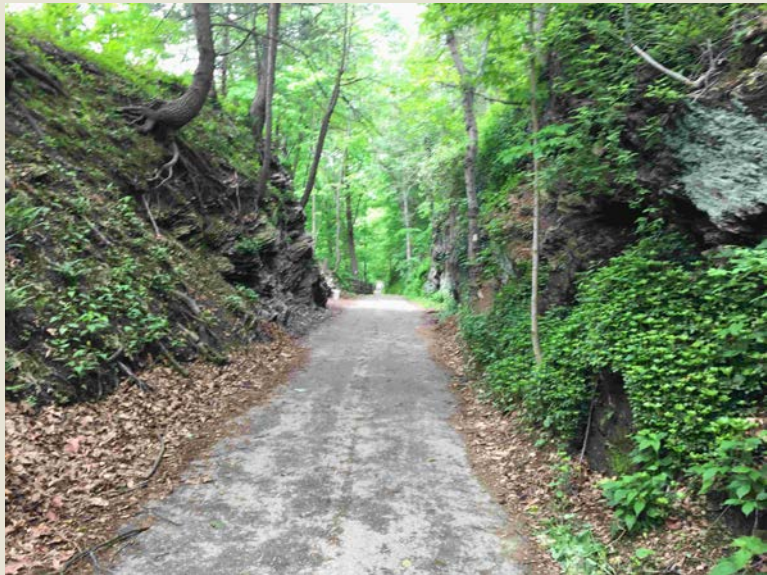
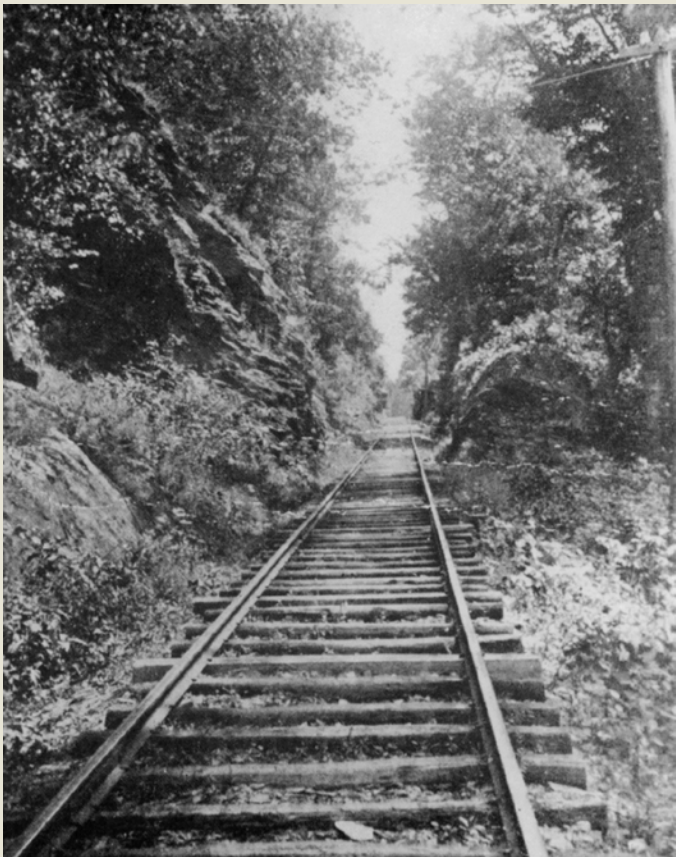


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The images on this page show the cut through the rocks near Sugars Bridge. The cut was probably the most difficult portion workers faced when constructing the trolley line. The top two images show the cut facing west taken when the line was in service.



The image below shows the Sugars Bridge cut facing east when the line was in service. The image top right was taken from approximately the same location in 2004 before the trail was built. The image bottom right faces west and shows the paved trail as it is now through the cut.



About half way between the Sugars Bridge cut and Harmony Hill Road the East Branch Brandywine trail makes a sharp turn around a small ravine (top image below). Here, the trolley line crossed the ravine on a small bridge. The remnants of the bridge's stone abutments can still be seen, though they are a bit difficult to see in the spring and summer. The bottom image was taken during the winter just east of Harmony Hill Road. We believe this was a picnic spot where the trolley made a special stop. The pond was used for swimming and stone remains may have been part of a pavilion.



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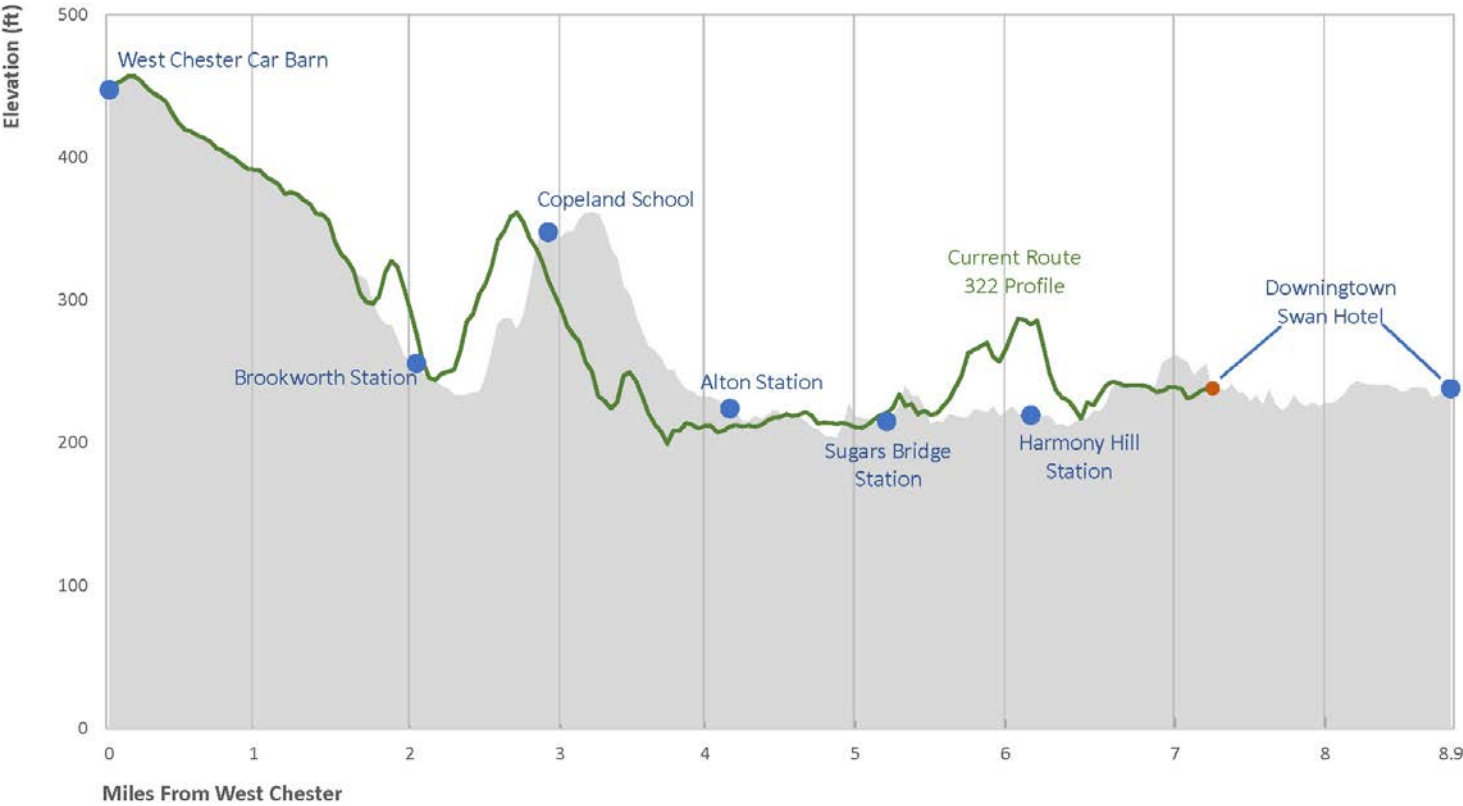
Just east of Harmony Hill Road, and right by what we think was a picnic area with a swimming pond, there was a passing siding, or turnout, for the trolley. There were several sidings along the trolley line so eastbound and westbound cars could pass each other on the single trolley track. The picnic tables seen in the top image below is where the siding was located. The stone and block structure seen in the bottom image is located along the trail right near the siding location. Its purpose was very puzzling to us for a long time, but we now think we know what it was. In 1906, telephones were installed in small shelters along the line so operators of the trolley could communicate with the trolley office in West Chester with any operational issues. We think this is the remains of one of the telephone shelters.



We will continue along the trolley line in the next issue of ***History Notes***.

While we are on the subject of the West Chester-Downingtown Trolley, below is an elevation profile of the trolley line (in gray) from the West Chester Car Barn (present Bicentennial Garage) to the Swan Hotel which was in the center of Downingtown. The green line is the elevation profile between the same two points for current Route 322. An elevation profile is a two-dimensional cross sectional view of the landscape and is used to show both elevation change and distance between geographic points. Between West Chester and Downingtown the elevation drops over 200 feet but intermediate elevation changes can be seen, especially on the trolley line at Copeland School and on Route 322 by East Bradford Elementary School. The distance between West Chester and Downingtown on Route 322 is 7.2 miles compared to 8.9 miles on the trolley line. What is interesting is that the throughout the trolley's existence the mileage between West Chester and Downingtown was usually noted at 7 miles when it was actually a couple of miles more. The trolley fare chart at the bottom shows the mileage between West Chester and Downingtown's Pennsylvania Railroad Station at 7.5 miles. It was well over nine miles.

West Chester - Downingtown Trolley Line Elevation Profile



West Chester to Downingtown and Coatesville						
Change at Downingtown.						
Downingtown to Coatesville now building; expected complete June 1st.						
From West Chester to	MILEAGE		FARE		TIME	
	Between Stations	From W. Chester	Between Stations	From W. Chester	Between Stations	From W. Chester
					H M	H M
Brookworth	1				5	
Alton.....	2				10	
Sugar's Bridge.....	1		5		5	
Harmony Hill.....	1				5	
East Downingtown.....	2				10	
Downingtown P. R. R. Station	1½	7½	5	10	5	40
Gallerghersville.....	1½				5	
Thorndale	1½		5		5	
Caln.....	1½				5	
Coatesville.....	1½	13½	5	20	5	60

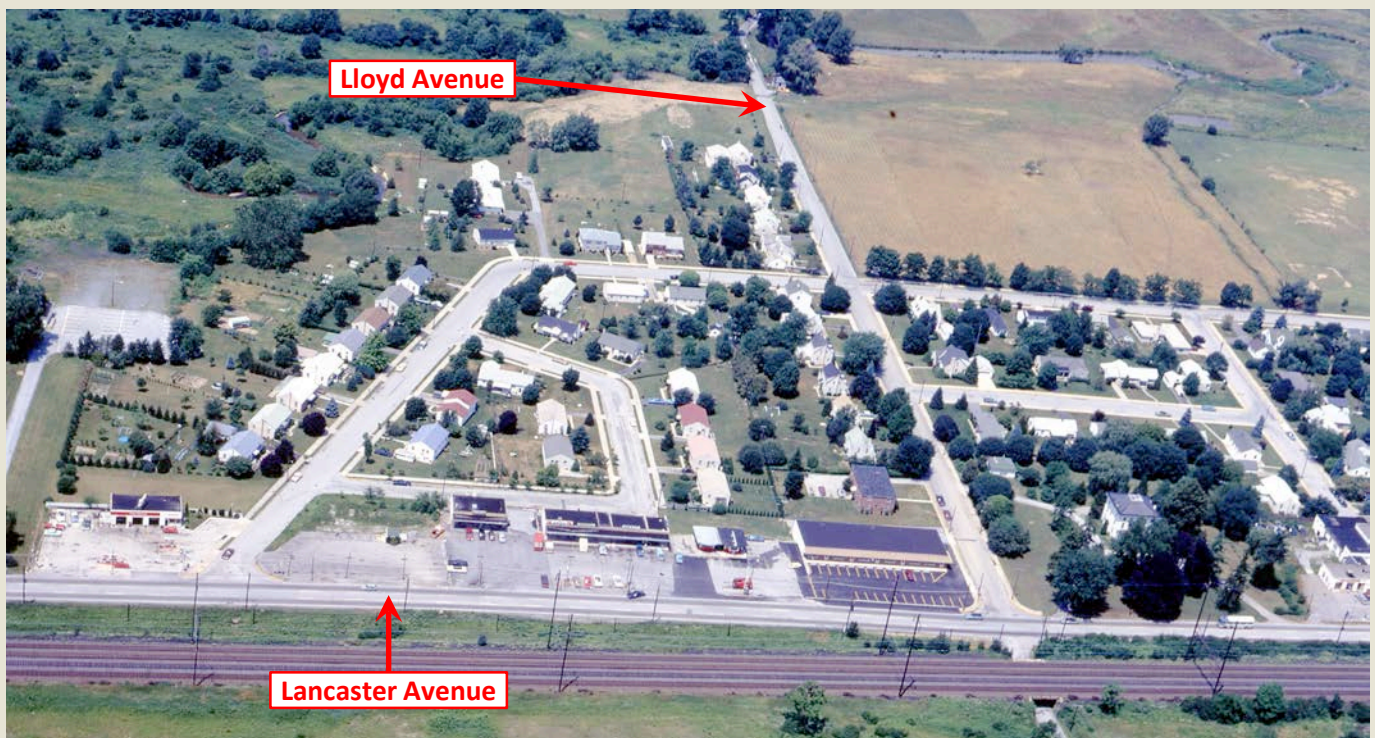
Last Issue's Mystery Pic

Rahn Brackin is truly a perceptive scholar because he was the first person to identify the location below. The image was taken on Washington Avenue and looks north up Park Alley toward East Lancaster Avenue. Of course, the image we had in the last issue was cropped, otherwise it would have been very easy to identify the location with the Minquas Fire Station on the right. But we chose to only show the structure on the left which was a garage (downstairs) and living quarters (upstairs) for the old Parke mansion on East Lancaster Avenue.



Downingtown Area From Above

This photograph was taken over the western end of Downingtown facing north in the early 1970s.



Downingtown Area Vintage Ad

This ad from 1927 was for the Alert Fire Company's summer carnival. At the time, the Alert Fire Company was located on Downing Avenue in the building that is behind the Downingtown Diner.

The ad says the carnival was on the grounds adjoining the fire house. At the time, the lot where the Downingtown Diner sits was vacant but that seems too small for a carnival. It also could be the large lot to the rear of the fire company which is where Brandywine Grace Church is now (the former St. Joseph School).

8 BIG NIGHTS	Alert Fire Company	8 BIG NIGHTS
CARNIVAL		
GROUNDS ADJOINING FIRE HOUSE :: LINCOLN HIGHWAY and DOWNING AVENUE		
DOWNINGTOWN, PA.		
JULY 1st --- JULY 9th		
7 --- BIG BANDS --- 7		
And Other Entertainers Presenting Programs That Will Please Everyone !		
JULY 1 -- WEST CHESTER BAND	JULY 7 -- KAMESTOWN FIRE DEPT.	
JULY 2 -- CONTINENTAL BAND	Jack Corcoran's Gang With a 60-Piece Boys' Band	
JULY 4 -- STAR BAND of Coatesville	JULY 8 -- CHURCHTOWN BAND	
JULY 5 -- ATGLEN BAND	JULY 9 -- ATGLEN BAND	
JULY 6 -- St. Josephs' Dramatic Club		
LOTS OF PARKING SPACE !	MANY OTHER NEW and NOVEL ATTRACTIONS ! SPECIAL FEATURES EACH EVENING !!	LOTS OF PARKING SPACE !

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.



Advertisements for Non-Profits

Uwchlan Township Historical Commission

The Uwchlan Township Historical Commission will open the Edith P. Moore Schoolhouse (9 North Village Avenue, Lionville) and the John Cadwalader House (21 North Village Avenue, Lionville) on the first Sunday of each month, April through November. Hours for both are 2PM-4PM.

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, will meet Wednesday, April 17, 2019 at 7PM at the Kennett Friends Meeting House on PA Rt 82 (125 W. Sickie St., Kennett Square, PA 19348). This will be a special support meeting to answer your questions, share your experiences, and meet others who are battling Lyme Disease. Meetings are free and all are welcome. Check www.lymepa.org for directions.

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 is 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.

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.

Historical Society's Wish List

The Downingtown Area Historical Society is a non-profit organization proudly maintaining the 310-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:
 - Pens and pencils
 - Scotch tape and masking tape
 - Copier paper (both color and white)
 - Light bulbs
 - Paper towels
 - Large and small trash bags
- 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!



Downingtown Area Historical Society

P.O. Box 9, Downingtown, PA 19335

610-269-1709

dths1709@gmail.com

<https://www.downingtownhistory.org>

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Follow us on Twitter:



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



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