

The modern Google map above shows the detour that was in place in 1921 (in red) that was a result of the replacement of the Lincoln Highway (Lancaster Avenue) bridge over the Brandywine River.

Before the Pennsylvania Turnpike was constructed, the primary east-west route across Pennsylvania was the Lincoln Highway. The Highway itself stretched over 3,000 miles from New York City to San Francisco, and during a period in 1921 the section through Downingtown had the “unenviable reputation as one of the worst spots on the famous trans-continental trail.” The problem had to do with the replacement of the 1801 bridge over the Brandywine River in Downingtown which resulted in a lengthy and dangerous detour. The detour, which might seem more of a nuisance today over the same roads, was much more problematic in 1921.

To detour the bridge, a car heading west on the Lincoln Highway/Lancaster Avenue would turn south on Brandywine Avenue and travel down a “fairly good macadam road” to Kerr’s Bridge which was located almost beneath the Pennsylvania Railroad’s trestle bridge. Kerr’s was a one-lane covered bridge described as an “ancient-covered wooden structure...in extremely unstable condition” that was never built to handle the amount of traffic that resulted from the detour.

After crossing the Brandywine on Kerr’s Bridge, a sharp right turn was made onto what is now Bradford Avenue, which at the time was described as a “narrow, rough and slippery dirt road” with only “flimsy protections” that would prevent a vehicle from dropping 30 feet into the creek below. After a mile or so, and after cutting through the Johnsontown neighborhood of Downingtown, a right turn was made onto Viaduct Avenue which itself was under construction.

The detour continued through the railroad tunnel to the Lincoln Highway. However, this part of the Lincoln Highway was also under construction, so a vehicle continued north onto Downing Avenue then turned left onto Pennsylvania Avenue. The first half mile of Pennsylvania Avenue (to about Aston Avenue) was paved with “fair macadam” but the remaining half mile to Lloyd Avenue was a “rough and slippery dirt road.” If there was anything positive to say about the detour it was well-posted for the drivers to follow.

Today with normal, non-rush hour traffic it takes about 10 minutes to traverse to same route as the old detour. But given the slower speeds, the difficult road conditions, and the one-lane Kerr Bridge, it probably took 20-30 minutes in 1921. (continued on next page)



The 1801 bridge over the Brandywine River is seen in this early 20th century postcard image. It was replaced with the current bridge in 1921.



When the trolley line came through Downingtown in the early 1900s, it was constructed on a separate bridge adjacent to the 1801 bridge over the Brandywine River.

To help alleviate this problem, the citizens of Downingtown, along with the Pennsylvania State Highway Department, county officials, and the Automobile Club of Philadelphia proposed a new semi-permanent crossing of the Brandywine River in Downingtown. This crossing would not only significantly cut down the length of the detour, but would eliminate the Kerr's Bridge crossing as well as the poor road conditions on what is now Bradford Avenue. (continued on next page)



This image, which was probably taken in the late 1920s, shows the Pennsylvania Avenue bridge that was built to help alleviate the lengthy detour which resulted from the replacement of the Lancaster Avenue bridge in 1921. This bridge was the former trolley bridge located adjacent to bridge being replaced.

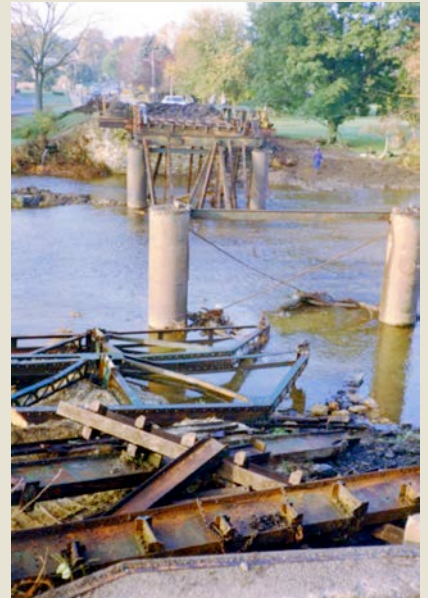


Here is another view of the old trolley bridge which was recycled as the Pennsylvania Avenue vehicular bridge. The walkways were added in the mid-1950s. This image was taken in the summer of 1985 shortly before the bridge was torn down and replaced with the current bridge.

After purchasing land for a new right-of-way, the old trolley bridge was reconstructed, and Pennsylvania Avenue was extended across it from Manor Avenue to Wallace Avenue. As a result, a much-improved detour was in place until the Lincoln Highway bridge opened for traffic. The recycled trolley bridge was described as a “sturdy affair” and “would stand up well as a bridge for vehicular traffic.” When reconstructed it was covered with wooden planks, but in the mid-1950s the wood was replaced with corrugated steel and macadam. The bridge was torn down in 1985 and a new Pennsylvania Avenue bridge opened in 1986.



A cyclist takes a ride over the Pennsylvania Avenue bridge (left) as preparations were being made to dismantle it in the fall of 1985. The image on the right taken a few weeks later shows most of the bridge's steel work has been taken down. In 1921, the old trolley bridge was re-used to extend Pennsylvania Avenue over the Brandywine River in order to temporarily alleviate traffic congestion in the Borough. It lasted more than 60 years!



Downingtown Area Vintage Ad

On the right is a 1978 advertisement for Tony's Meat Market at 227 Church Street in the Johnsontown section of Downingtown. Anthony Formica purchased the business from Herbie Talucci in 1977. Before that, Talucci operated the store as “Herbie's Meat Market” beginning in 1953. And before Herbie's, the building was the location for Cozzone and Sons which dates back to the early 1900s.

Below is what the location looks like today.



**Tony's
Meat Market**

227 Church St. Downingtown, Pa
Phone 269-1343

ALL FRESH

beef — pork — lamb — veal
and produce

MON - WED. 9AM TO 6PM
THURS - FRI. 9AM TO 9PM
SATURDAY 8AM TO 5PM

**Anthony S. Formica
proprietor**

Downingtown Area Group Photo



Here is a photograph taken ca. 1936 of students at the Marshallton School in West Bradford. Front row (l to r): Mabel Sellers, Robert Ludwick. Back row (l to r): N. Bullock, Mary Ciaffoni, B. Henson, Betty Keehn, Alberta Rudolf, Marjorie Rudolf, G. Smith, Jane Hall. Photo courtesy of David Walters.

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

1875 – One newspaper noted in November that “Mr. Morgan Hoffman, of Upper Uwchlan, Chester County, has a cat over twenty-one years of age; it has long since ceased to shed its coat.”

1901 – Joseph Hoopes was the first automobile owner in Downingtown. His car was described as a “first class vehicle” and that Hoopes “has learned the art of automobiling to perfection.”

1904 – On June 3rd at about 10:30pm the Liberty Bell passed through Downingtown by train on its way to be displayed at the St. Louis World’s Fair. Despite the late hour, hundreds of area residents turned out, and as the train went by patriotic songs were sung. The train consisted of five Pullman cars and a gondola car on the rear on which the bell rested. The bell arrived in St. Louise five days later.

1947 – In May, John Carper found the going too slow as he hitchhiked his way home to Tyrone, PA from Philadelphia. When in Downingtown, he stole a truck belonging to lumber dealer Canby and Son. The 24 year-old was arrested when he reached Harrisburg and was sent back to Downingtown, and eventually to Chester County prison. The truck was returned to its owners.

1957 – Over two nights in July, filming was done at the Downingtown Diner for the movie “The Molten Meteor.” The indoor scenes were shot on Monday, July 29th, followed by the outdoor scenes the next night, Tuesday, July 30th. Dozens of Downingtown residents were used as extras, and the Reverend Thomas Ogden, the fire department’s chaplain, was awarded a speaking role after tryouts. Of course, the film was released under the name “The Blob.”

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

It was another tie! **Kathleen Damiri** and **Anthony Fusco** are truly perceptive scholars because they were the first readers (we received their emails at the same time) to identify the location of the photo on the right as the Barmay Store on the southwest corner of Pennsylvania and Wallace Avenues. Barmay's was a discount clothing store and this location was established in 1959. Several readers responded that they remembered shopping at Barmay's, especially right before school started in the fall. Other businesses were located at this location including Downingtown Paint and Wallpaper for many years. Roberts Auto Mall is now located at the site.



We Missed A Few!

A recent issue of *History Notes* featured former car dealerships that were located in Downingtown. As we went through our files we found a few dealers we missed...

- **James Grassie** (below top) operated a Ford dealership at 20 West Lancaster Avenue in the early 1930s. This is the same location as the current Downingtown Police Station.
- **Howe's Garage** (lower left) was an early Cadillac dealer. They later moved to Washington Avenue where they sold used cars.
- **B. F. Leaman and Sons** (lower right) was the predecessor of Chemical Leaman Tank Lines but was an early seller of new and used cars.

SALES  SERVICE

Serving this Community

Ask for Demonstration
... In ...
THE NEW FORD
V-8
At the Approximate Price of
the previous Four-Cylinder Car



Also Offering a
New and Better
FOUR
At Lower Prices
Ask for Demonstration

JAMES GRASSIE

20 West Lancaster Avenue DOWNINGTOWN, PA. Phone 22



CADILLAC CARS ---- \$2635 Delivered



AGENT FOR OVERLAND CARS

RECOVERING TOPS AND PAINTING
STORAGE BATTERIES REPAIRED AND RECHARGED
AUTO SUPPLIES and ACCESSORIES

THE W. N. HOWE GARAGE
115 E. Lancaster Ave. E. Downingtown

See Leamans'
FOR GOOD
USED CARS



1929 Essex Coupe Challenger <small>EXCELLENT CONDITION THROUGHOUT. PRICE REASONABLE.</small>	Overland Sedan 4-Door <small>GOOD CONDITION THROUGHOUT. \$40 DOWN PAYMENT—Balance \$9 per Month.</small>
1928 Hudson Sedan <small>118 in. W. B. FULLY EQUIPPED—A VERY GOOD CAR. PRICE REASONABLE.</small>	Hudson Coach <small>VERY GOOD CONDITION. SMALL DOWN PAYMENT—Balance \$11.50 per Month.</small>
1928 Essex Coach <small>4-WHEEL BRAKES—VERY GOOD CONDITION THROUGHOUT. \$140 DOWN PAYMENT—Balance Monthly.</small>	Ford Tudor Sedan <small>MODEL T—VERY GOOD CONDITION THROUGHOUT PRICE REASONABLE</small>
1929 Essex Challenger Coach <small>WIRE WHEELS, DUCO PAINT, VERY GOOD RUNNING CONDITION. PRICED FOR A QUICK SALE</small>	

B. F. Leaman & Sons
HUDSON-ESSEX SALES AND SERVICE
 520 E. Lincoln Highway, Downingtown, Pa.
 EASY TERMS Open Evenings

Advertisements for Non-Profits

West Caln Historical Society

The Historical Society will hold a meeting on July 17, 2018 @ 7 PM in the West Caln Municipal Bldg., 721 W. Kings Hwy, Wagontown, PA. The subject will be: World Famous Sunset Park Remembered, presented by Anita Carr, daughter of former owner Lawrence Waltman. Sunset Park began in 1939 by G. Roy Waltman, Father of Lawrence. Lawrence ran it until late in the 1990's, with great performers such as Roy Acuff, Ernest Tubb, Patsy Cline, Johnny Cash, Bill Monroe, Sally Starr and Chief HalfTown, and others such as Frank Sinatra and the Ink Spots. Sunday in the summer at Sunset Park is where you should be. Meetings are free and open to the public, all are invited.

Marshallton United Methodist Church Chicken BBQ Dinner

The Marshallton United Methodist Church is hosting a Chicken BBQ Dinner on Saturday, July 21, 2018. The menu includes BBQ chicken (leg/thigh), cole slaw, corn on the cob, baked beans, roll & butter, dessert, and beverage. Hours for the "Eat-in" or "Take-out" option are from 4:30 to 6:30 pm. Cost is \$13/adult and \$5/child (5 to 12 years of age) if ordered before July 17 and \$15/\$5 at the door. The church is located at 1282 West Strasburg Road, West Chester, PA. Contact the church office at (610) 696-5247 or office@marshalltonchurch.org with any questions.

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 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.

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.

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>

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.

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 July 1st @ 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:

- 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)
- 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

www.downingtownareahistoricalsociety.org

Like us on Facebook:



Follow us on Twitter:



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



DAHS Board of Directors

President: Phil Dague

Vice President: Jim Sundman

Recording Secretary: Marion Piccolomini

Corresponding Secretary: Donna Capriotti

Treasurer: Lauren Fagan

Directors: Harry Helms, Mike Dunn, Jay Worrall,
Robin Ashby, Jordan Staub

Archivist: Carol Grigson

Presidents Emeritus: Roger Grigson, Parry Desmond