



Downingtown Area Historical Society *History Notes*

Interesting bits of Downingtown area history

May 10, 2018

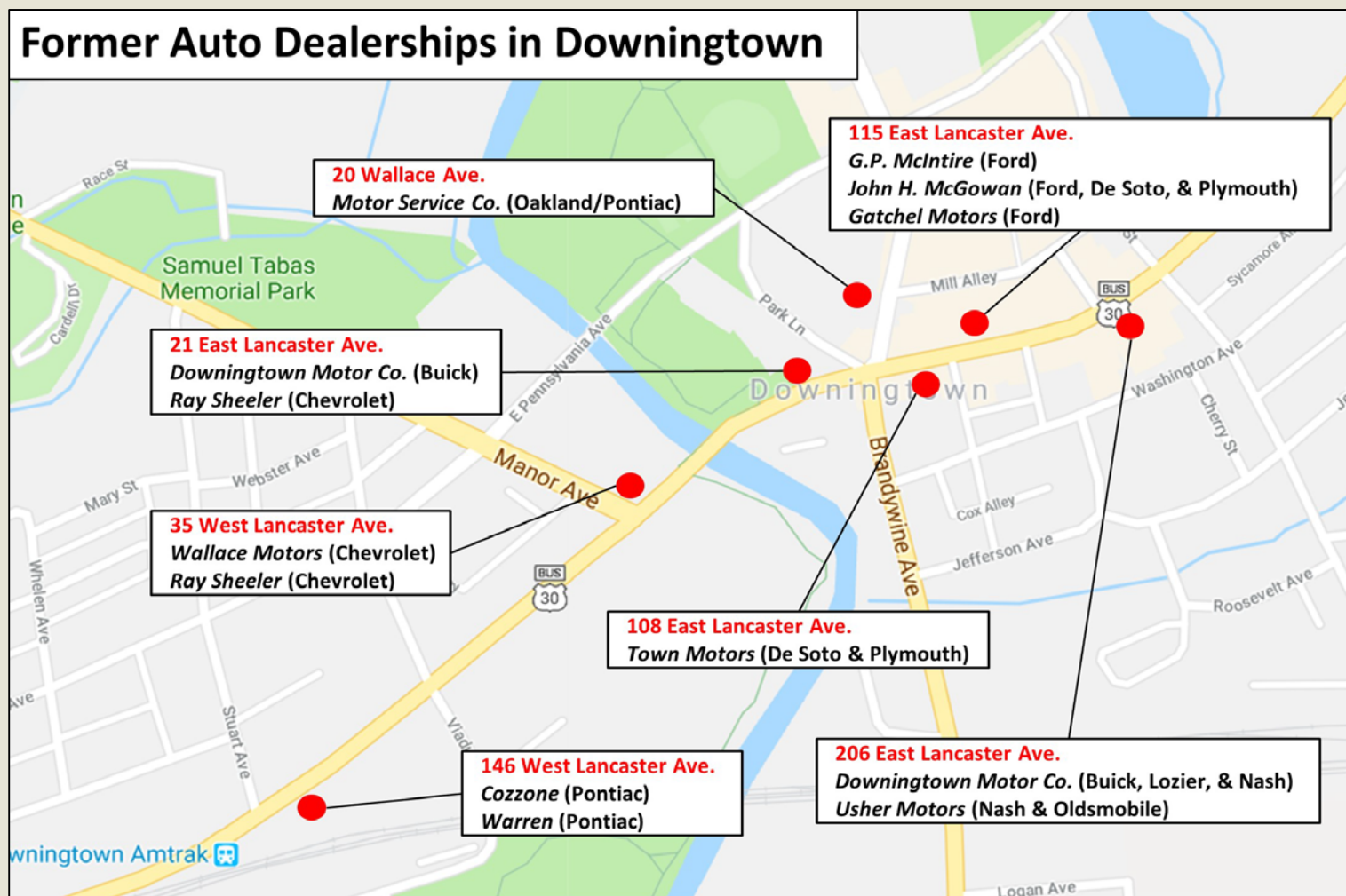
Volume 1, Issue 9

Downingtown's Old Auto Dealerships

Long before the days of large, brightly lit showrooms, and acres of gleaming new cars, Downingtowners who purchased a new or used vehicle probably went to a small, locally-owned dealer located right in town. The first dealership in the Borough was the Downingtown Motor Company, which sold Buicks beginning around 1906 at 206 East Lancaster Avenue, the same building where Colonial Electric is now located. Others followed over the years so that by the late 1940s, six in were in business at the same time, representing most major American brands.

The modern map below shows the locations of the dealers in the Borough. Not all were in business at the same time, and two that we know of (Downingtown Motor Co. and Ray Sheeler) where in two different locations while in business. The pages following show images and vintage advertising of some of the dealerships. If you have any memories of these dealerships or anything you can add, please email us at: dahs19335@gmail.com.

Former Auto Dealerships in Downingtown



Check out our "Then & Now" short videos of several of Downingtown car dealerships:

Town Motors: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v2wmbIMpvdA>

Warren Pontiac: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HT65966pE4o>

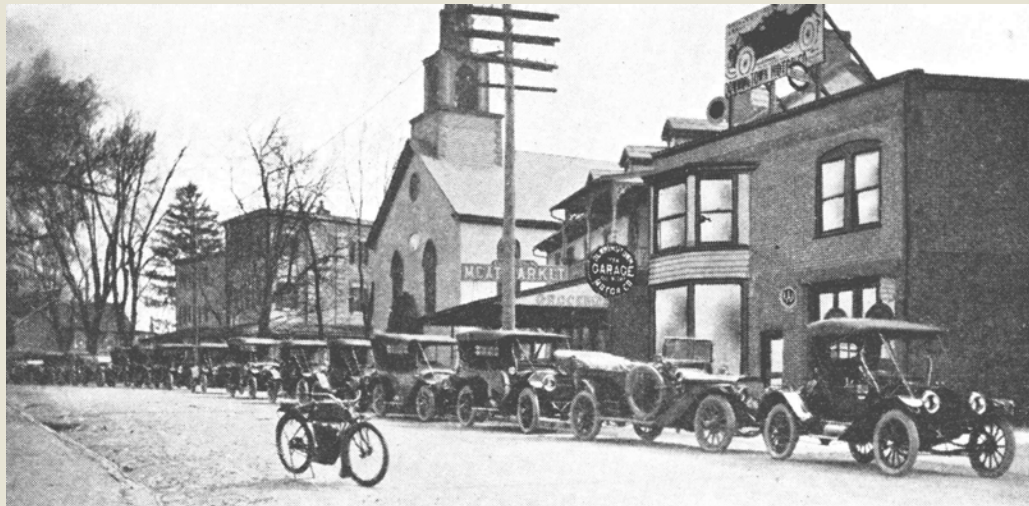
Usher Motors: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LuCe6QowwhE>

Wallace Chevrolet: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9yx86gQMI4E>

Downingtown Motor Co: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rqEEgD2yVU8>

The Downingtown Motor Company shows off its new Buicks in front of its showroom and garage at 206 East Lancaster Avenue in this image from 1932.

Downingtown Motors would later move to 21 East Lancaster Avenue next to the Log House, the same building where Economy Glass is now located.



Wallace Motors (below and right) was Downingtown's first Chevrolet dealership and was selling cars out of its small showroom at 35 East Lancaster Avenue, the current location of Creekside Antiques. Ray Sheeler was the manager of Wallace Motors and would go on to buy the company and sell cars under his own name.


Sales

CHEVROLET

Service

AGAIN CHEVROLET LEADS WITH

The Great American Value



--- AT ---

New Low Prices

Continuing in the Six Field with Values Greater than ever. Ask for a demonstration — get the New Low Prices — and let your own judgment guide you to Absolute Motor Satisfaction. Added to Chevrolet's own Quality is the Popularity of WALLACE'S SERVICE . . . a combination to make you a Satisfied Owner.

An Organization Dedicated to the Service of the Motorist

WALLACE MOTORS

RAY G. SHEELER, Manager

35 W. Lancaster Ave. -:- DOWNINGTOWN, PA. -:- Phone 216

for Economical Transportation

CHEVROLET

so Smooth so Powerful



First Choice of the Nation
for 1928!

The COACH
\$585

The Touring	\$495
or Roadster	..
The Coupe	.. \$595
The 4-Door	.. \$675
Delux	..
The Convertible	.. \$695
Coach	..
The Imperial	.. \$715
Landau	..
Truck	.. \$520
Utility	..
Light Delivery	.. \$375
(Chassis Only)	..

All prices f. o. b. Flint, Michigan

Check Chevrolet Delivered Prices

They include the best handling and maintenance charges

Although the Bigger and Better Chevrolet offers elements of beauty never before thought possible in a low-priced automobile... although it offers the features of advanced design and completeness of detail demanded in the world's finest cars... one of the fundamental reasons for its tremendous success is found in its amazing performance—

—so smooth, so powerful and so unfailingly dependable that it has literally captivated more than three-quarters of a million buyers since January 1st! Come in and drive this sensational car! Drive it as long and as far as you like—in traffic and on the road. We know that you'll say that no other automobile in all the world can give you so much—at prices so amazingly low!

1928

Wallace Motor Company

Downingtown, Pa.

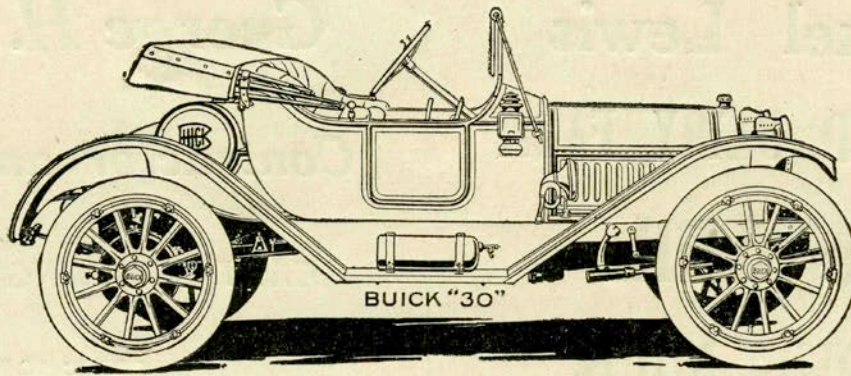
BUICK

AUTOMOBILES

BOUGHT

SOLD AND

REPAIRED



LOZIER

TIRES

WIND SHIELDS

PRESTO

LITE TANKS

GASOLINE

OILS

STEAM HEATED, FIRE PROOF GARAGE

DOWNINGTOWN MOTOR COMPANY

EAST DOWNINGTOWN, PA.

WILLIAM H. CAREY, Mgr

The Downingtown Motor Company started off selling Buicks but soon added Lozier automobiles to its lineup as seen in this 1912 advertisement. The Lozier Car Company was in business from 1910 to 1915. Downingtown Motor Company would also sell Waltham and Nash automobiles from its showroom at 208 East Lancaster Ave.

John H. McGowan & Son

Authorized

FORD and FORDSON

SALES and SERVICE

East Downingtown

Penna.

Telephone 20

Left, John H. McGowan & Son sold Ford Automobiles out of its showroom at 115 East Lancaster Avenue which is on the west side of where the Coffee Cup is now located. McGowan would eventually move into selling farm machinery and tractors.

FORD

THE UNIVERSAL CAR

New Prices August 1, 1916

The following prices for Ford Cars will be effective on and after August 1st, 1916

Chassis . . .	\$325.00
Runabout . . .	345.00
Touring Car . . .	360.00
Coupelet . . .	505.00
Town Car . . .	595.00
Sedan . . .	645.00

f. o. b. Detroit

These prices are positively guaranteed against any reduction before August 1st, 1917, but there is no guarantee against an advance in price at any time.

G. P. McINTIRE, East Downingtown, Pa.

Agent for East Caln, East Brandywine and Wallace Townships and Downingtown Borough.

The Ford dealership of G.P. McIntire (left) was probably the second auto dealership in Downingtown after the Downingtown Motor Company. However, McIntire was no longer in business after 1919.

Motor Service Company on Wallace Avenue (right) was the first Pontiac dealer in Downingtown (the Pontiac brand began as Oakland). This ad is from 1932.

PONTIAC-CHIEF of VALUES

"6" and "V-8"

"MAKING NEW FRIENDS AND KEEPING THE OLD"

Sales Service

SEE THESE SUPER MOTOR VALUES . . .

The New "6" and "V-8" brings you the Important Developments of the year. See It—Drive It—and you will Like It.

General Repairs To All Makes Of Cars

An Organization ever on the alert to render Maximum Motor Service and join in Cooperation for the Best Welfare and Interests of Our Community

Willard Batteries --- U. S. Tires --- Atlantic and Crewlevick Gas and Motor Oils

J. E. McCLURE

JOHN BELTZ

MOTOR SERVICE CO.

Wallace Avenue

Phone 217

DOWNINGTOWN, PA.

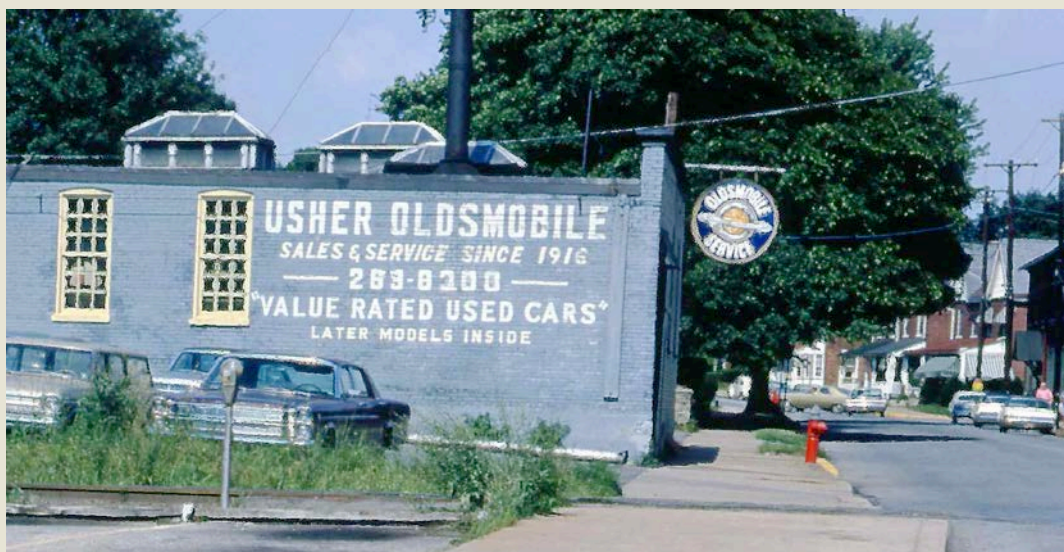
Town Motors (right) sold De Sotos and Plymouths at 108 East Lancaster Avenue in a lot next to the old Swan Hotel. The dealership would eventually move to a much larger location at Lincoln Highway and Bell Tavern Road.



Warren Pontiac (below) at 146 West Lancaster Avenue (opposite Stuart Avenue) was owned by Warren Strawsnyder. He purchased the dealership from Anthony Cozzone in 1955. Cozzone had owned it since 1948.

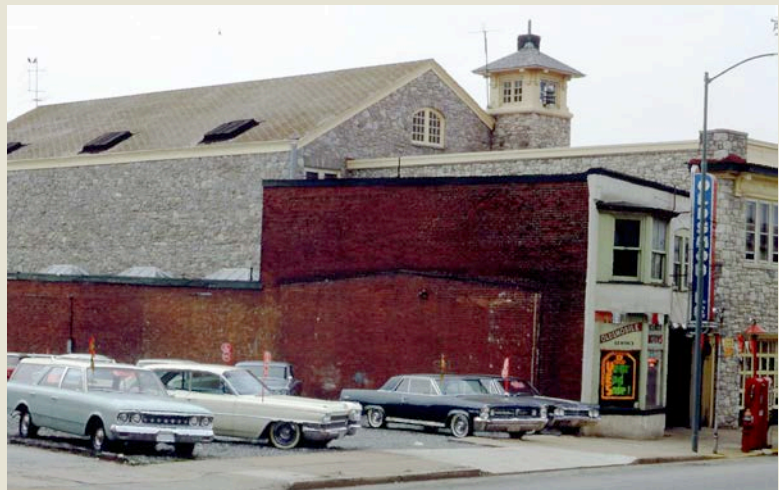


At right is the rear entrance to Usher Oldsmobile on Washington Avenue. Usher took over the building where the Downingtown Motor Company was located at 206 East Lancaster (current location of Colonial Electric).



At right is an advertisement for Gatchel Motors from 1948. Gatchel was Downingtown's Ford dealership after John McGowan at 115 West Lancaster Avenue.

Below is Usher Motors which was Downingtown's Oldsmobile dealership at 208 East Lancaster Avenue next to the Minquas fire station (this was the original location of the Downingtown Motor Company). They also sold gasoline – notice the red pumps out front.



"YOU GET THE NEW 'MID SHIP' RIDE!"

"SIX travel comfortably in the level center section where the going's smoothest. Plenty of hip and shoulder room for all!"

"IT'S GOT A 'LIFEGUARD' BODY... AND 'MAGIC ACTION' RING-SIZE BRAKES THAT OPERATE 35% EASIER!"

8-26-48

The '49 Ford

"THE REAR WINDOW IS WINDSHIELD BIG!"

"NEW 'PICTURE WINDOW' VISIBILITY."

57% MORE LUGGAGE SPACE

"SEATS SOFA-WIDE!"

White sidewall tires available at extra cost.

The Car of the Year!

A New "Top-Side" Distributor Mounting. B New Overdrive.
 C New Lubrication System. D New "Hydra-Coil" Springs.
 E New 100 hp. V-8, or 95 hp. Six. F New bar-section frame.
 G New "Para-Flex" Rear springs. *optional at extra cost

"NEW FROM THE GROUND UP!"

There's a **NEW Ford** in your future

PLACE YOUR ORDER TODAY AT YOUR FORD DEALER'S

GATCHEL MOTORS

DOWNINGTOWN



Ray Sheeler's Chevrolet dealership was at first located at the corner of West Lancaster and Manor Avenues opposite the Baptist church (left). He later moved to the building at 21 East Lancaster Avenue next to the original log house location (below) as seen during the 1976 Bicentennial parade.



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



Last Issue's Mystery Pic

Bob Stevens is truly a perceptive scholar because he was the first person to identify the location of the photo on the right as a home off Lloyd Avenue that burned to the ground in 1956. Bob remembers as a 16 year-old hearing fire trucks and seeing smoke, and riding his bike to the fire. **Jeff Stevens** and **Tom Lee** added that the house was located where Stonebridge Lane is now located, and that the fire fighters had a difficult time getting water from Beaver Creek and one of its tributaries near the house because the water was so shallow.



Downingtown Group Photo

This group photo is of the Downingtown High School class of 1946 taken at their 15th anniversary reunion held at the Swan Hotel in Downingtown on April 1, 1961.



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

1835 – The new railroad operating through Downingtown was popular with local residents but was causing great concern to farmers along the line. On February 5th, for third time in short period, a barn near the tracks was set on fire from the sparks of a passing locomotive.

1838 – An eastbound passenger train leaving Downingtown on March 29th could not proceed more than a few miles on account of the bridge over Valley Creek (the current location of the 'twin tunnels' on Valley Creek Road) being on fire. The fire was caused by sparks from a locomotive of an earlier train. The bridge was entirely destroyed and trains could not get between Philadelphia and Downingtown and other points west for weeks until the bridge was rebuilt.

1840 – On April 5th a large hotel that had recently been built at Oakland (Whitford) burned down from the sparks of a passing locomotive. It was a total loss and the building was uninsured.

1894 – On October 8th, the engineer of an express westbound Pennsylvania Railroad train stopped quickly at Downingtown with the cab of his locomotive on fire. Just before reaching Whiteland (Exton) station, he discovered that the ash pan beneath the locomotive's fire box had set the cab's floor on fire. He was unable to extinguish the flames himself so he pulled the locomotive's throttle wide open and made a quick run for Downingtown. It was said that before this time no train had ever run as fast on that stretch of tracks. When he reached Downingtown he was able to quickly get a hose and put out the fire, saving the locomotive.

1899 – In a similar situation, on February 25th, the westbound Pennsylvania Railroad's *Pacific Express* made a "record-breaking run" for Downingtown when the roof of a Pullman dining car caught fire east of town. The roof of the car had to be cut away so Downingtown firefighters could reach the main body of the fire.

Downingtown Area Historical Society

Book “Sale” & Living History Event

Looking for something a little different to do on Mother’s Day Weekend? Why not come out to visit the Downingtown Area Historical Society from 1pm to 4pm on Sat-Sun, April 12th-13th.

We are located at the historic Ashbridge House, 849 East Lancaster Avenue right in front of Chick-fil-A.

Please come out and support the Downingtown Area Historical Society and enjoy some interesting and educational encounters as you get to know us!

- **SPRING BOOK “SALE”** – browse 1000s of used and interesting books to find the right summer reading material. **ALL** books are **FREE**, but whether you take 1 book or 100, we are requesting a donation to the Historical Society in an amount of your choosing. (We do, however, have some books that are rare or in sets that are specially priced).
- **Civil War Re-enactor** with camp and interpretations.
- **Touch a HOWITZER** - come see Downingtown’s own 12lb Dahlgren Boat Howitzer from the Civil War and find out about its fascinating history.
- **Tour the 1709 Ashbridge House** and learn its history and available volunteer opportunities.

We look forward to seeing you there!

Advertisements for Non-Profits

Old Caln Historical Society

A craft/antique/flea market will be held on May 12th (rain date May 19th) from 9-2 pm on the lawn of the Caln Township Municipal Building, 253 Municipal Drive, Thorndale. Table space is available. For information call Joan 610-384-9496 or Lois 610-384-8153.

West Caln Historical Society

This Historical Society will hold a meeting on Tuesday, May 15, 2018 at 7 PM at the West Caln Municipal Building, 721 W. Kings Highway, Coatesville. Author Bruce Mowday will speaking on his book, "J. Howard Wert's Gettysburg: A Collection of Relics from the Civil War Battle." All are welcome and meetings are always free.

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.

Spring 2018 East Brandywine Historical Commission Speakers Series

The final program in the Spring series will be held on Sunday, May 20 at 3:30 PM at the East Brandywine Township Building. Pamela Powell, Photo Archivist at Chester County Historical Society will present a program called "How Old is That Picture" that will introduce methodology used to assign a date range to historical photograph. Ever wondered how old is that picture in the attic? What date are those family photos? Photographing process and visual clues along with costume and background details will be explained. Time will be allowed for questions and individuals may bring one image with them to be dated.

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. 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.

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 June 3rd @ 1:00 PM
- **The first Tuesday of the month, 6:30-8:00 PM (with pizza!)**
Next one June 5th @ 6:30 PM

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)
- 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:



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Corresponding Secretary: Donna Capriotti

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Archivist: Carol Grigson

Presidents Emeritus: Roger Grigson, Parry Desmond