



Downingtown Area Historical Society *History Notes*

Interesting bits of Downingtown area history

June 26, 2020

Volume 3, Issue 10

Downingtown's Law and Order Society

On Saturday, June 5, 1886, the following notice appeared in the *Chester County Archive* which was published in Downingtown.

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC – AT A RECENT MEETING of the Executive Committee of the Law and Order Society of Downingtown and vicinity, by direction of the society, the officers were instructed to issue notice to the public that on and after June 6, 1886 (first Sabbath in June), the society, in the name of the Commonwealth, ask all persons to properly and duly observe the Sabbath day.

It is the desire and intent of the society that the Sabbath laws be respected by all people of our borough and vicinity, and it is hoped that all persons will give cheerful obedience, otherwise the society will take prompt measures to enforce the laws, prosecuting to the full extent all cases of violation.

By order of the Executive Committee.

Attest: A.P. TUTTON, President.

HARRY L. SKEEN, Secretary

About two months prior to the publication of the notice, the Law and Order Society was organized in Downingtown by several prohibitionists in the Borough. It drew some attention from the local populace and “furnished food for gossip for the town for two or three weeks,” but overall, it didn’t generate much excitement until the notice appeared in the Archive. The Society’s primary purpose was to enforce Sunday blue laws by prohibiting the sale and delivery of Sunday newspapers and the closure of all the Borough’s cigar shops. In addition, Downingtown’s two drug stores, though allowed to stay open on Sundays, would be limited in what they sold. Violation of the blue laws would result, as the notice stated, in “prompt measures” being taken.

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What prompt measures were to be taken by the Society were made very clear the next day when A. P. Tutton and Joseph Johnson met the Sunday morning train which brought the *Philadelphia Times* newspaper to town (the *Philadelphia Inquirer* didn't publish on Sundays yet). At the station, the pair warned railroad baggage agent William Ward not to sell or deliver any newspapers in Downingtown, and if he did so, he would be placed under arrest and fined four dollars. After the threat Ward agreed, and dozens of Borough residents were deprived of their papers that day. However, word had gotten out about the Society's plans to suppress the delivery and sale of the Sunday papers so that nearly fifty residents sent their names to the Union News Company in Philadelphia and had the *Times* wrapped with their names on them so they could be picked up on the platform. Others went aboard the train and bought any papers they could find. Tutton and Johnson picked up on this, but they were unsuccessful in their attempts to stop it.



Howard B. Sides' drug store is seen here on West Lancaster Avenue ca. 1890. The building now houses the Station Taproom.

The Society's efforts did not stop with the Sunday papers. They also targeted Downingtown's two drug stores and half dozen cigar shops. On Sundays, the drug stores (Hutchison's Pharmacy on the east end of town and Sides' Drug Store on the west end) were ordered to only sell medicines prescribed by a physician. The cigar stores were warned not to open at all. A young boy who went into Sides' came out crying when he was told by the druggist he could not sell him two cents worth of licorice. A woman who wanted to purchase a toothbrush was told "she would have to wait till Monday to clean her teeth." Smokers who did not purchase enough cigars to get them through till Monday went to doctor's homes in the hopes of getting a prescription to purchase cigars at the drug stores.

The local butcher Elmer Entrekin was also targeted. Entrekin routinely kept meat in his shop's ice box overnight on Saturday's and delivered it fresh to his customers Sunday mornings. After making his deliveries that morning, Tutton and Johnson considered arresting Entrekin, but let him off with a warning.

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On Monday, no other subject dominated the talk in Downingtown. Farmers who came to town that day found the topic of discussion on the porches and bar rooms of the two hotels was the Law and Order Society and nothing else. The question that continued to be discussed was "what they will do next?"

What did the Society do next? Not much it appears. No other information has been found about actions they did the following Sunday or any Sunday after that in Downingtown. The Society may have simply felt the effort wasn't worth the division they were causing in the Borough. Dr. Laban Bremerman was heard saying they had "bitten off more than they could chew." Or it could have been they were acting a bit hypocritical. Some residents noted that employees of the Downingtown Stove Works had worked on a recent Sunday to fill an important order. One of the directors of the Stove Works was A. P. Tutton, the president of the Law and Order Society.

The drug store of David W. Hutchison (right) was located on East Lancaster Avenue next to the Swan Hotel.

Hutchison's Pharmacy.



DRUGS,
DRUGGISTS' SUNDRIES,
STATIONERY, BOOKS,
ETC., ETC.

Paint, Oil, Lead, Turpentine,
Glass and all material
for painting.

Special attention given the
Prescription Department.

Every courtesy shown
customers.



D. W. Hutchison,

EAST DOWNINGTOWN.

SODA WATER in season.

Downingtown Area Group Photo

A group of workers are seen here pausing for a lunch break on Pennsylvania Avenue in a photo taken by former Borough Manager Don Greenleaf some time in the 1960s.



Downingtownthen & Now

The images below are of the southwest corner of East Lancaster Avenue and Green Street in Downingtownthen. We are not sure of the date of the older photograph, but it may have been around 1910 when it was a private residence owned by Theodore Griffith (who could be the person in the photograph). The building began as a private residence, became a school, followed by a hotel, and then a private residence again. You can read more of its history from a previous issue of History Notes here: [History Notes \(Volume 2, Issue 22\)](#).



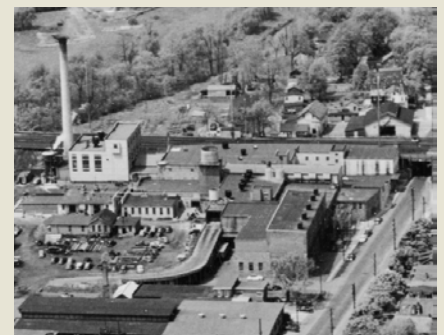
History For Your Home or Business

The Downingtown Area Historical Society has partnered with [4 Leaf Framing](#) located at 131 Wallace Avenue (Unit 8) in Downingtown to sell reprints of an historic map and aerial photograph. The color map is from 1897 and shows property owners in the Borough. The outside measurements of the frame are 37 inches wide by 27 inches tall. The aerial photograph was taken in 1947 facing north and shows the center of Downingtown along with long-gone farmland and industries. The outside frame measures 38 inches wide by 25 inches tall. Both will be framed and ready to hang. We haven't determined prices for either as we want to gauge interest from our readers first. However, all proceeds will benefit the Historical Society. If you have interest in either, please email us at dths1709@gmail.com.

Close-up of the center of
Downingtown



Close-up of the Downingtown
Paper Company

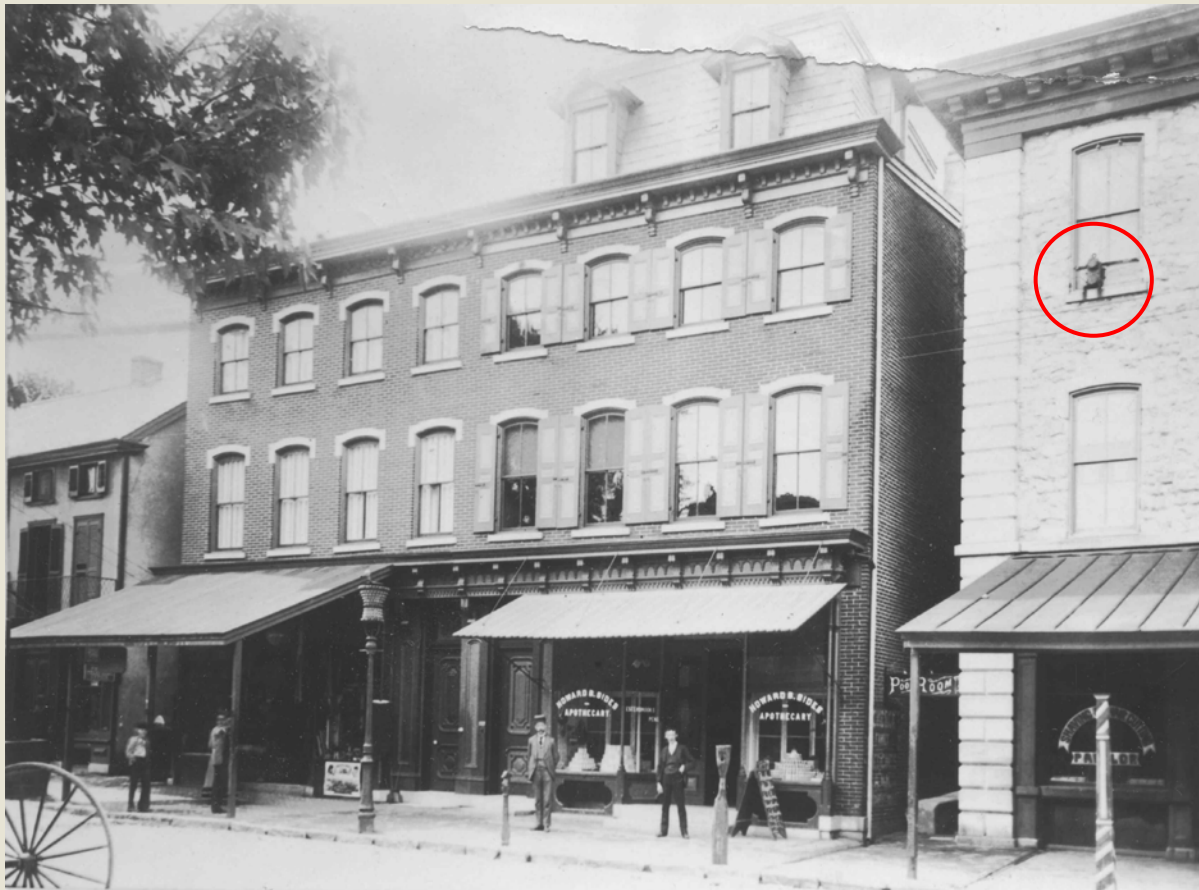


What is it?

A recent "Then & Now" which we posted on Facebook showed a ca. 1890 image of Howard B. Sides' pharmacy on West Lancaster Avenue morphing into the Station Taproom which occupies the same building today. On the east side of Sides' building was a three-story building that stood at the northwest corner of West Lancaster and Stuart Avenues. The old image shows an object sitting on a third story windowsill of this building. We've always wondered about this object, and several readers of our Facebook post asked about it too. So we made another post and zoomed in to the mysterious object asking readers their opinion. Besides an alien, an elf on a shelf, Humpty Dumpty, and a stink bug, readers mentioned:

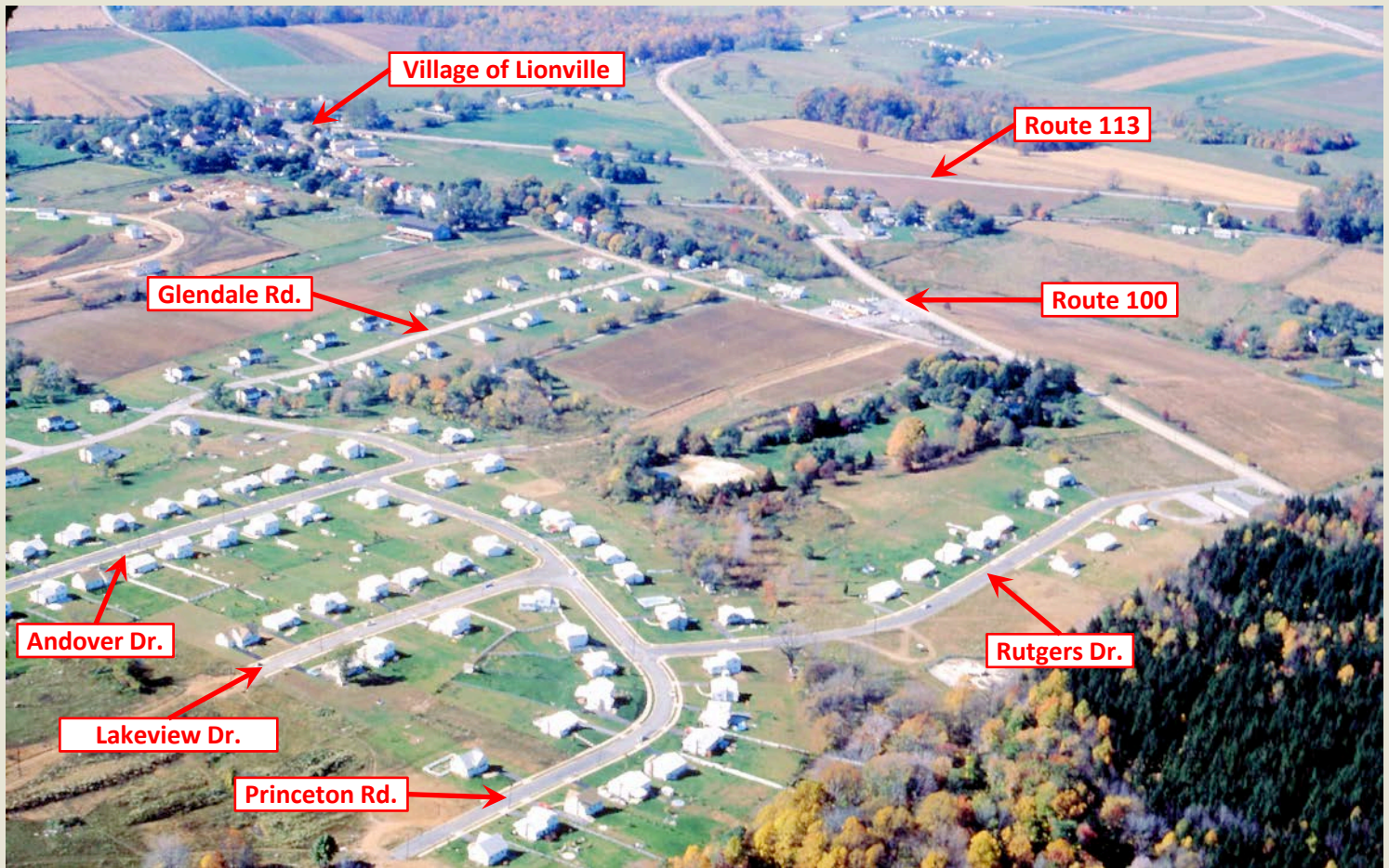
- Some type of alarm
- Pulley system
- Weather station
- A meter of some sort
- Bird house
- A type of railroad signal

The object appears to have a hook at the top and very short legs that go over the windowsill. What look like rust stains continue below the legs. If you have any ideas, please email us at dths1709@gmail.com.



Downingtown Area From Above

The photograph below was taken by Don Greenleaf in 1966 and shows the area southeast of the Village of Lionville in Uwchlan Township.



The Mystery of the Clock

Wallace Township Historical Commission invites you to a talk: The Mystery of the Clock. Find out why the Mormons paid a visit to Wallace Township before setting out for the trip west and the imprint they left on the local residents. The presentation will take place at the Wallace Township Building on Creek Road (Route 282) on Sunday, July 12, 2020 at 2:00 pm. John Miller, a life-long resident of Wallace, educator, local historian will present the talk.

If interested, please call Wallace Township with your name and phone number: 610 942 2880. We will be limited to the number of people attending.

Playground Rules

In October 1919, Downingtown's Home and School League, the Public School Board of Directors, and principals of the schools, drew up rules and regulations to "govern the time, manner and use of the public school playgrounds and their equipment." Among these rules were the following:

- The Public School playgrounds and equipment were intended for the use of all the children of Downingtown.
- Any person violating any of the rules, or damaging any of the playground apparatus, shall be denied further privilege of using the equipment, and pay for the destruction of or for the replacement of the property damaged or destroyed.
- The grounds and equipment shall not be used by any one at any time on Sunday; or at any time on weekdays forbidden by the Board of Directors.
- Any children using profane or vulgar language, fighting, or causing any other trouble, shall, after due notice, be debarred from attendance at the playgrounds.



The image above was not taken in Downingtown, but it's a reminder of the type of playground equipment that some of us fondly remember.

- Children shall leave the grounds at twilight.
- On Saturdays and holidays the playground in the East Ward shall be open to girls only, and the playground in the West Ward to boys only.
- Children using the playground apparatus do so entirely at their own risk and responsibility.
- The playground apparatus shall at no time be monopolized by one set of pupils, but shall be rotated in such a manner as to accommodate the greatest number of pupils.
- Rules for the use of the apparatus to be observed by children: Children are forbidden to attempt daring feats on the swings, see-saws or giant strides, or in any way use any of the apparatus, such as (a) crowding the platform slides, (b) crowding the swings, (c) swinging too high, (d) sliding down the chutes on shoes.

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

1879 – In February, according to the *Philadelphia Times*, “unruly youngsters at the ‘seminary’ in West Pikeland, Chester County, have caused the school to be closed.

1885 – In February, John L. Bair was traveling on a train from Philadelphia to Gap when the conductor asked him to go into the smoking car or leave the train. At Downingtown he decided to leave the train “accelerated, he said, by the conductor’s pushes.” He brought suit against the railroad for an “illegal eviction” and in May the case was heard in court. Upon cross-examination, Bair admitted he and two friends who were traveling with him had drinks before boarding the train in Philadelphia and drank from a flask while on the train. The conductor and other passengers testified that the men were drinking and were “noisy and objectionable.” The jury ruled in favor of the defense without leaving their seats in the courtroom. According to the judge, “the conductor would have been justified in throwing them out through the window if necessary.”

1912 – In October, Sylvester “West” Makens retired from the Reading Railroad after 46 years of service. The Downingtown resident, who was a popular conductor on the Railroad’s Chester Valley Branch, reached the mandatory retirement age of 70 on October 21. Upon his retirement, Makens was given a “handsome gold watch chain and Masonic mark” by the Lodge of Elks in West Chester where he was a member.

1964 – On December 20, a special half-hour documentary titled *Decision at Marsh Creek* was shown on Philadelphia’s WRCV-TV. A crew from the station traveled to Chester County to film the properties impacted by the proposed dam and reservoir which would eventually become Marsh Creek State Park. Footage was taken of homes in the Village of Milford Mills including the McClure Mansion which was the former home of Philadelphia mobster “Boo Boo” Hoff. Interviews included one with Robert Struble, head of the Brandywine Valley Association. The station later became KYW-TV.

Downingtown Vintage Ad

Do you remember the **Ten Downing Street** restaurant which was located in what is now the Milltown Square Shopping Center? The ad appeared in the January 8, 1981 edition of the *East Branch Citizen*.

Ten Downing St.

presents
Nostalgia!
One night only...Jan. 14th ★

★
**Lee Andrews
and The Hearts**

★ remember?
“Long, Long &
Lonely Nights”
“Try the Impossible” ★
“Teardrops”
“The Clock” ★

\$5 per person



Major
Credit
Cards

10 Downing Center, Downingtown 269-4579

Last Issue's Mystery Pic

Bob Good is a truly perceptive scholar because he was the first person to identify the image below as a close-up of the Pennsylvania Railroad's Low-Grade Bridge at Whitford.



Reopening and History Notes Update

Our headquarters (the Ashbridge House next to Chick-Fil-A in Downingtown) remains closed but we hope to reopen as soon as we can with our regular Sunday hours (1pm-4pm). However, if you need to visit us, we can try to accommodate you by appoint. Please contact us with any questions.

As noted in the last issue, we decided to put out the next few History Notes issues monthly instead of bi-monthly. We had hoped to put this issue out sooner. Thank you for understanding.

Downingtown Area Mystery Pic

Can you identify the location in this photograph? 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

Due to COVID-19 most, if not all, events that the Historical Society has posted for non-profits have been cancelled. When you reopen or when your event has been rescheduled please email the information to the Historical Society at dths1709@gmail.com to have your advertisement re-posted.

Historical Society's Wish List

The Downingtown Area Historical Society is a non-profit organization proudly maintaining the 311-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 tools including:
 - Spade shovel
 - 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>

Like us on Facebook:



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



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