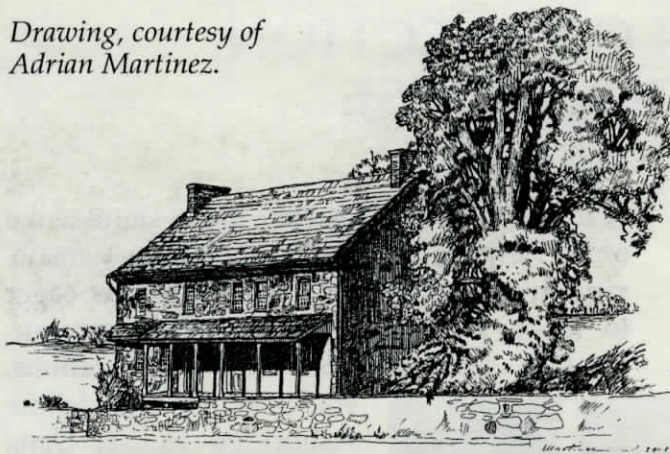


Drawing, courtesy of
Adrian Martinez.



The TURNPIKE TIMES

Volume ~~8~~ Number ~~1~~

~~Fall, 2002~~

Winter 2003

A PUBLICATION OF THE DOWNINGTOWN AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The President's Message

by Roger Grigson

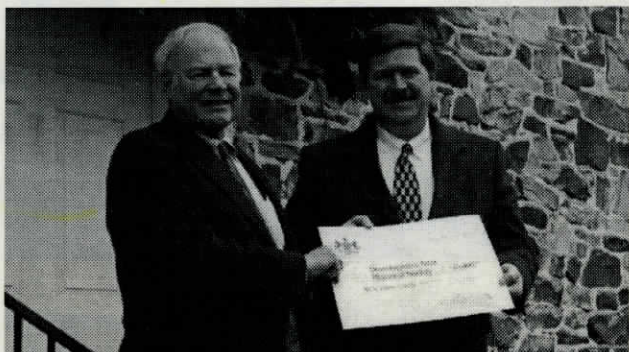
The Ashbridge Restoration is moving at a fast pace. The windows look terrific; we have only four doors to renovate, completing the outside. The interior is the largest challenge and should be done this summer. We have received a grant of \$10,000 from Representative Curt Schroder to help with the heating and air conditioning, and a \$2,000 donation from the Downingtown Women's Club to help furnish the interior.

Our March quarterly meeting will be held on March 10th and will feature an exciting speaker. Wayne Woodward, a former writer for the Coatesville

Record, will share some of his exciting stories.

In addition to our speaker, we will be electing members of the Board of Directors at that meeting. Please come, we have a lot of exciting updates and plans for East Caln's 275th celebration in September.

Plans are being developed to actively recruit and copy photographs and other ephemera held by citizens in the Downingtown Area. We will then be able to reference these items for the information they can give us and cross index them with other items in our collection. ❄



Through the efforts of Representative Curt Schroder, the Downingtown Area Historical Society was the recipient of a \$10,000 grant from the Department of Community and Economic Development. This grant was given for the purposes of helping install heating and air conditioning to the Ashbridge House. We are really appreciative of the efforts of Representative Schroder.

Our Website: Thanks to the diligent efforts of Jay Byerly, DHS has an attractive, informative and expanded-upon website which is connected to several Chester County links by simply keying in "downingtown historical society" or <http://www.downingtownhistoricalsociety.org>

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OUR CANADIAN CONNECTION TO ASHBRIDGE HOUSE

By Roger and Carol Grigson

Who would ever think there could be another Ashbridge House, with geneological roots the same as ours, up in Ontario, Canada? The first of the Pennsylvania Ashbridges, George, came to Pennsylvania in 1698. From this source, some of the family moved to the Goshens in the early 1700's, where they became active members of the Goshen Meeting. Our history remained common history until 1791 when a branch of the Ashbridges moved to York, Ontario in 1791. Later in the 1800's, the family split even more when a branch moved to East Caln.



Roger pictured with Dena Doroszenko

In the middle of October, Dena Doroszenko of the Heritage Foundation of Ontario, Canada, visited our Ashbridge House. She was eager to touch base after much written communication between the two organizations.

As gifts to the fellow Ashbridge House, Dena brought a history of the Ashbridge Family, written by the Canadian branch, but also including our branch. Many plaques from a celebration in Ontario (reproductions of deeds) which we can later use in our own exhibits were brought and presented to us. ❄

GLENMOORE, ONCE AN INDIANTOWN

PART I

By Ruth Lowe

SOMETIME before 1725, Alexander and David Henderson, European pioneers, walked from Philadelphia to a site near the Brandywine where there were two springs. On the 1725 tax list, Alexander and David Henderson were listed as living in Indiantown. The Indian village was located in present day Glenmoore in Wallace Township. The former Indiantown School located at Indiantown Road and Fairview Road is a reminder of Glenmoore's past. Local historian John Shrader said that the Brandywine Band of Indians lived in Glenmoore from about 1720-1735. In 1733, the Henderson's purchased the tract of land along Indiantown Road, which included the Indian Village and Indian



Burying Ground. The Henderson's promised the Native Americans, then called Indians by the European settlers, that they would not disturb the graves. Cornfields were planted around the burial ground. The land stayed in the Henderson family for several generations. A solitary chestnut tree marked the Indian Burying Ground, now just a stump of a tree.

In 1952, Gilbert Montgomery, owner of the former Henderson tract, sponsored an archeological study to verify the burial ground



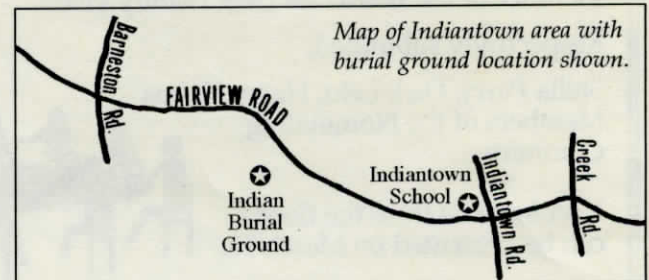
Blighted chestnut tree marking the Indian Burial ground in Glenmoore.

and its location. Five members of the Archaeological Society of Delaware and Mr. and Mrs. Richard Cadbury of Glenmoore, who represented the Chester County Historical Society, conducted the investigation.

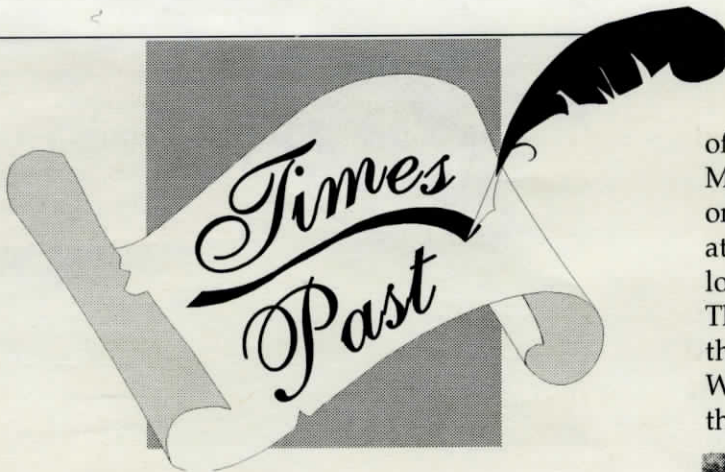
The investigators uncovered the disintegrating remains of an adult male Native American, considered to be an important person in the tribe. The body lay extended on its back with the head resting on a stone

pillow, facing westward. The depth of the grave was 31 inches. According to C.A. Weslager, President of the Archaeological Society of Delaware, this burial custom had not been recorded before for the Brandywine Band of Indians in this area.

Buried with the Native American, for his journey to the next world, were three 18th century European white clay pipes, an embossed brass button, two gun flints, 61 glass beads, and several oxidized iron objects. It is believed that there were about 100 unmarked graves on this quarter-acre site.



More on Glenmoore Indiantown in next issue. ❄

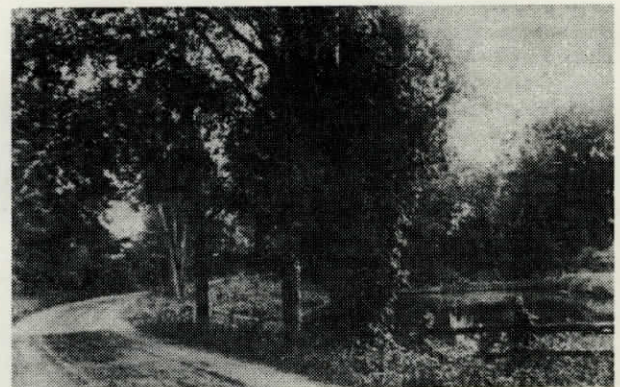


Glen Moore – Jan. 28, 1879

There is great cause for concern about the ice gorge in the dam near Glen Moore. Ever since Christmas, the dam has been covered with ice which is now over a foot in thickness. The waters have been rising all day and it is feared it will break this evening and cause much destruction of property. Huge pieces of ice are piled all along the banks of the stream. The water have risen several feet, and in many places overflowing onto the road, making it impossible for travel.

Wallace Township – Feb. 10, 1880

This past week there was great harvesting of ice among the farmers of Wallace Township. Many tons of ice were cut from Springton Dam on Thursday and Friday last week, and the dam at Glen Moore was literally thronged with teams loading and hauling in different directions. The large ice house in Glen Moore, belonging to the hotel property now owned by James Wagon seller, was filled on Friday by farmers in the vicinity for their own accommodation.



Ice dam on Fairview Road.

***Report of the Nominating Committee for
Directors to the Board of Directors:
to be presented at annual general
meeting on March 10, 2003
Simpson Meadows, 7:30 p.m.***

For two year terms, expiring in March, 2005, the following names will be placed in nomination:

Carol Grigson
Vernon (Ernie) Jameson
Robert Kahler

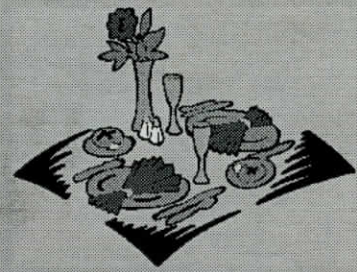
Jay Byerly
Thomas Roberts

Nomination as Board Member Emeritus, William Woodruff, member of the Board for over twenty years.

Respectfully submitted,

Stella Parry, Dick Lehr, Harry Helms
Members of the Nominating
Committee

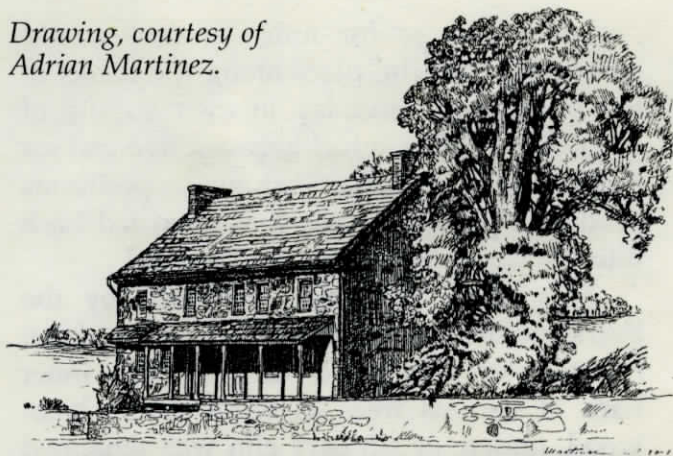
Nominations from the floor
can be presented on March 10.



*Join us for
this year's
Annual Dinner
at
St. Anthony's Lodge
on
May 18th, 2003*

Downingtown Area Historical Society
P.O. Box 9
Downingtown, PA 19335

Drawing, courtesy of
Adrian Martinez.



The TURNPIKE TIMES

Volume 8, Number 2

Spring, 2003

A PUBLICATION OF THE DOWNINGTOWN AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The President's Message

by Roger Grigson

Don't forget our Annual Dinner on Sunday May 18th at St. Anthony's Lodge. (Details on this page). Listening to Susanna Brody's stories is worth the \$25 alone.

Raising money, in many forms, is much on our minds. We have spent/pledged \$440,000 on the Ashbridge House. We need only \$560,000 to complete our goal of 1 million—by the end of the year. This would be an appropriate time to put DAHS in your will. Send us a note, and we will have our attorney get in touch with you. We have also just learned that we need to reregister our Cropper's Gold

Cards again to count for the second half of the year. (It used to be one time per year.) The signup time is from May 1 to June 1. We then receive 1% of all the purchases made by those designating DAHS as the beneficiary.

Save the date of July 4th for Good Neighbor Day at Kerr Park. We will have our booth again this year with our brand new 2004 calendars and our brand new afghan of Downingtown. Proceeds will go into the capital campaign.

Please read this newsletter to find out about other exciting events coming up. ✱

DAHS Annual Dinner Sunday, May 18, 2003

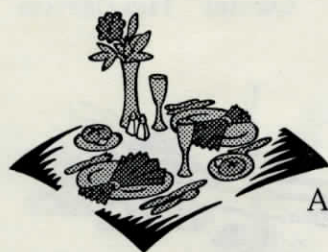
St. Anthony's Lodge
259 Church St., Downingtown

5:00 pm cash bar

5:45 pm dinner

Choice of: Turkey Breast
or Pork Porchetta

Appetizer, vegetables, dessert
and beverage included



Program – *Homefront: Stories of the
American Revolution*

Susanna Brody, Storyteller

\$25 per person (inclusive)

Reservations/payment before May 9, 2003

For information call 610-269-1167

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GLENMOORE, ONCE AN INDIANTOWN

PART II

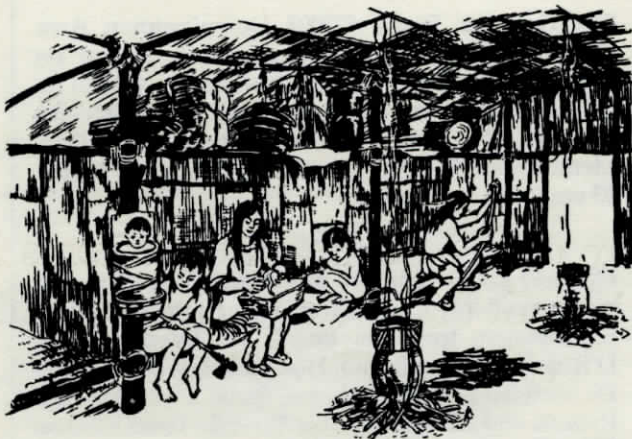
By Ruth Lowe

IN THE EARLY 1700's, the Lenni Lenape Indians lived in a village on the Brandywine at present day Glenmoore. Lenni Lenape, as they called themselves, means "Original People." The Europeans called the Lenni Lenape, the Brandywine Indians, named after their favorite fishing stream. They are also known as the Delawares.

The village consisted of thirty wigwams clustered in groups of five or six wigwams on the sheltered hillside for protection against enemies. The village was near two springs which provided a good supply of water. Narrow footpaths were worn bare by their travels.

In that time period fish were plentiful in the pure Brandywine and Indian Run. Also the forests abounded with deer and small game. The Lenni Lenape had an abundant supply of fish and game to meet their simple needs. The timber was burned from the summits of the ridges making it easier to hunt the deer, and make small clearings near the villages.

The open fields with charred tree trunks here and there, were prepared by the Indian women. They hoed the ground readying it for planting corn and tobacco. It was the boys job to shoot arrows to frighten the crows as they scratched around the hills.

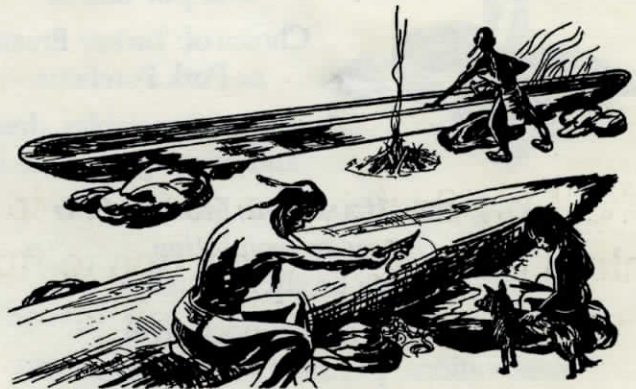


The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission

Lenni Lenape for miles around would gather at a favorite place along the banks of the Brandywine and lay in their supply of shad. The shad weighed between five and six pounds each. These fishing expeditions produced paths or trails that often led back into the Welsh Mountains and beyond.

Fish traps and fish nets used by the Brandywines were made of vines from honeysuckle, bittersweet, or from bark. Inner bark of various trees as white cedar, basswood, linden, or slippery elm was separated from the outer bark and cut into strips about a half-inch wide, then woven or braided into a strong twine that could be used to make traps or fish lines. Literally hundreds of hours were spent by the women working all winter to braid bark into enough twine to make nets 30 or 40 feet long that were put across the stream during the shad run in the spring.

Imagine that it is a fine spring day in Indiantown along the Brandywine in 1730. Looking around, you see the hillsides of fine woods and the village of wigwams. Some of the women are preparing a meal and some are tilling the cornfields by turning the underbrush with stone tools. Some men and young boys are making bows from trees while others are fishing, and the younger children are playing. Some men are returning from the quarry with stone for their workshop where they hammer and flake it into arrowheads, drills, axes, and scrappers. The young girls are collecting kindling and wood for the fire. This is the Indiantown that Alexander and Daniel Henderson experienced.



The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission

PS: Why did the Lenni Lenape leave the area?

As more European settlers came to the area they cleared and cultivated the forests, and dammed the streams for mills. The Brandywines and the Europeans did not have the same concept of land ownership. To the Brandywines, ownership meant the right to use the land, to plant it, to build wigwams on it, but not to possess it permanently by one owner. They believed



The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission

the land should not be fenced excluding them from entry. This concept was basic to the Indian belief in hospitality whereby a stranger's physical needs were fully satisfied by his host who would willingly share everything.

These interferences and differences contributed to the Brandywines moving to other areas to continue their way of life. ❁

Times Past

VILLAGE RECORD 1824 – Joseph Lewis

In order to guard effectually the sacred deposit of the bones of the dead, Indians piled up stones to a considerable height, in the form of a cone over the graves. In the county many of these monuments, the best known one stood upon the top of a hill a short distance above Downingtown, and about a mile south of the turnpike (Rt. 30) where a large collection of stone is yet to be seen. During the Revolutionary War, a party of Indians coming from a distance threw down the pile and carried off the bones that were buried under it.

An ancient stone fish weir, or trap believed to have been created by the Indians, still exists in the Brandywine along Doe Run and near Chadds Ford.

THE ARCHIVE July 1, 1904 –

Glen Moore's Ideal Fourth

Our neighboring town, Glen Moore, will have an "Ideal Fourth." They will have a grand street parade in the evening, in which the different fraternal organizations of that section will participate. Three bands of music will be present to enliven the occasion. The feature of the parade will be public school children in floats on wagons. The day at Glen Moore will certainly be up to the standard in way of amusements, as the Improvement Co., who has charge, always sees to the enjoyment of the public.

Parties from Downingtown who desire to see the parade can leave on the regular train at 5:40 p.m. The special train returning leaves Glen Moore at 10:30 p.m.





Preserving Our History...
Educating Our Community...

DOWNINGTOWN AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
AND THE
BRANDYWINE CHAPTER OF THE
PENNSYLVANIA RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION



present the

"Ashbridge Classic" Golf Tournament

Wednesday, May 21, 2003

Registration at 7:30am • Rounds begin at 8:30

HONEYBROOK GOLF CLUB

1422 CAMBRIDGE ROAD

The day includes: breakfast, lunch, hats and a round of golf

\$110 per golfer or \$400 per foursome

**For a Tee Time Reservation and More Information
call 610-269-7739 or 610-793-0201**

*Funds raised benefit the restoration
of the Historic Ashbridge House*



Hole-in-One Prizes

1st Prize

JEEP WRANGLER
donated by Town Motors

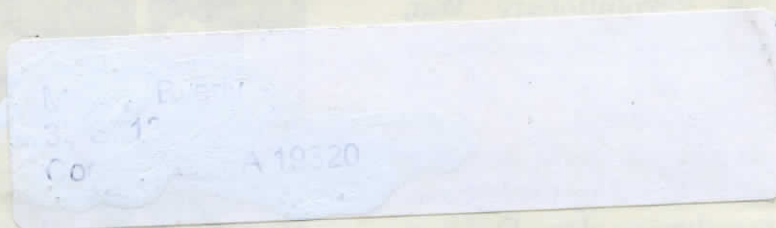
2nd Prize

7-DAY CRUISE
in the Bahamas
donated by Freesers, Inc.

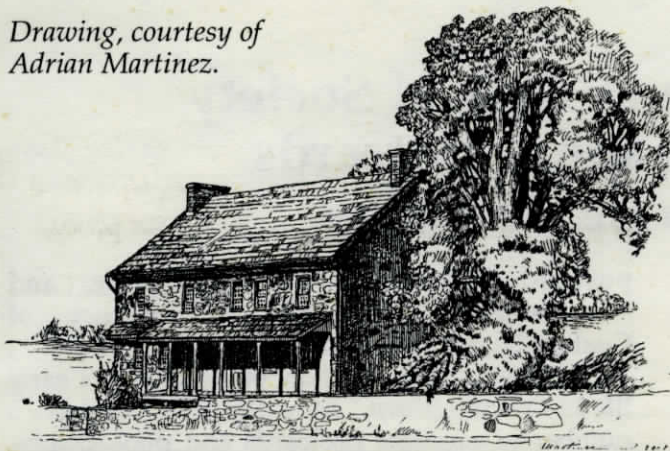
3rd Prize

3-Day 2-Night Stay
at Myrtle Beach
donated by Freesers, Inc.

Downingtown Area Historical Society
P.O. Box 9
Downingtown, PA 19335



Drawing, courtesy of
Adrian Martinez.



The TURNPIKE TIMES

Volume 8, Number 34
Summer, 2003

A PUBLICATION OF THE DOWNINGTOWN AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The President's Message

by Roger Grigson

On Saturday, September 20, East Caln will celebrate their 275th anniversary. We have been an active part of this committee and are providing crafters, storytellers, reenactors, and tours of the Ashbridge House. This is our chance to show off the house (the outside is nearly complete) and talk about the inside and our plans for it. Plan to visit the Ashbridge House between 12 and 3, enjoy refreshments and see all the work which has been completed.

We have attained one third of our Capital Campaign goal of \$1,000,000. We will be needing 2-3 person teams to make contact with members of

the Downingtown area, probably in October. Hopefully, we hope to see 200-300 people

Luminaria was a great success last year. Block captains will be notified at the end of September for 2003. If your neighborhood is not part of the celebration, call me at 610-269-1167.

Hope to see you at some of the upcoming activities. Meanwhile, help us sell our 2nd edition calendars and first edition afghans. Our fall quarterly meeting will be September 8, Simpson Meadows, 101 Plaza Drive, Downingtown. Refreshments are at 7 and slides of Chester County Day begin at 7:30. All is free and open to the public.

Calendars Now Available!

LIMITED SUPPLY!

Created from old postcards of Downingtown. Each month a different view.

Order yours now for \$10.

Would make a wonderful Christmas gift!

Call 610-269-1167



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Downingtown Area Historical Society seeks old photographs, postcards

Society is working on publication of book

DOWNINGTOWN – The Downingtown Area Historical Society is seeking the loan of old photographs and postcards for a book that should be published next year.

"We've been talking with representatives of Arcadia Publications and we're close to having a signed agreement," said Roger Grigson, President of the Downingtown Area Historical Society. "Arcadia does a wonderful job in preserving the history of an area."

The Downingtown area photographs must be at least 50 years old and the postcards need to date before 1920. Only originals can be considered for inclusion in the book. The images will be returned after publication. Anyone interested in sharing images should contact Grigson at 610-269-5413 or Bruce E. Mowday at 610-873-0727.

Mowday, a member of the DAHS, is aiding in the project. He has written two other books for Arcadia, "Along the Brandywine River," a

postcard history of the Brandywine, and "Coatesville," a photographic history of Coatesville released earlier this year.

"We would like to show every aspect of early life in Downingtown," Mowday said. "We have a number of excellent postcards and photographs, but we could use some of churches and community groups and any other interesting images."

The Downingtown Area Historical Society is in the midst of a fundraising campaign to restore the Ashbridge House, the future home of the Historical Society.

The Ashbridge House, located on Business Route 30 in the Ashbridge Shopping Center in East Caln, was built in 1709, is one of the earliest structures existing in Chester County. Founded in 1978, the Historical Society is dedicated to making the history of the Downingtown area available to all residents of Chester County. ☼

Calendar of upcoming events which may be of interest—

September 8—Chester County Day slides, Simpson Meadows, Refreshments at 7, slides at 7:30

September 12—Wine and Cheese Party to benefit Thomas Mill (Lancaster Ave in West Whiteland), held at Colebrook Manor, for info call: 610-363-9525 6-8 p.m.

September 20—East Caln Fest, 275th anniversary, all day, Bell Tavern Park (See details elsewhere in this newsletter)

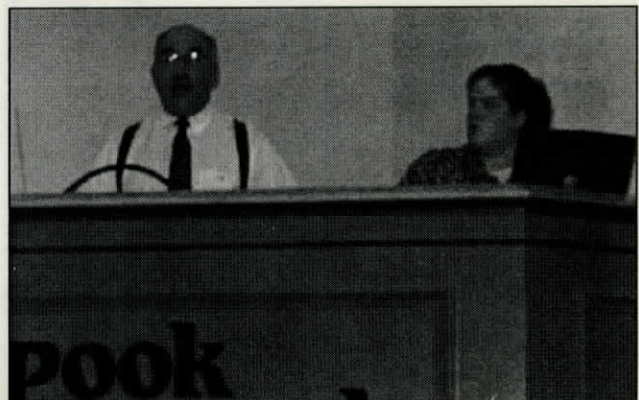
October 4—Chester Co. Day House Tour

October 11—Downingtown Friends Fall Festival, 10 am, all day Quaker wedding reenactment at 1:00 p.m.

POOK AUCTION

In May, 2003, the Downingtown Area Historical Society was notified that we would receive \$40,000 in a matching grant from the Chester County Visitors and Tourist Bureau. This matching grant was to be used for finishing the interior rooms of the Ashbridge House.

Though very grateful of the grant award, the immediate problem was how to raise the matching funds so that all work could be completed by May, 2004. Ron Pook, of Pook and Pook, Inc., came to our rescue. On June 6, a benefit auction was held, bring slightly more than \$36,000 to the Society. With his help, the house is taking on a new life, bringing us closer to using it for the community resource it is intended to be.



WILLIAM LEVI "BUCK" TAYLOR

by Carol Grigson

Anyone living in Chester County, even for a short time, learns that Buffalo Bill spent some time in this county. What may not be widely known is that the Wild West Show wintered their animals in West Brandywine at the turn of the century.

What is probably also totally unknown in today's busy world is that one of the stars of the show, William Levi "Buck" Taylor, lived in Pennsylvania from 1896 until his death in 1924. He is also buried in National Cemetery at Valley Forge. Also a native of Chester County, Charlie Trego from Honey Brook, became manager of the show, traveling with it for 13 years.

To add to the flavor of the early dime novels, Buck wove a tale about his beginnings in Texas. His father was born in Fredricksburg Texas in 1836, when Texas was still subject to Indian raids. In on such raid, his father's ranch was attacked, leaving only Buck and his older brother alive. In later interviews, Buck seemed to embellish the stories and lose sight of who fought the Commanche Indians, who fought in the war against Mexico, and who survived—himself or his father. However, William Levi Taylor was not born until 1857, thus eliminating him from these earlier historical events. However, what is certain is that by age 18, he was considered a master of the saddle, gun, and rope.

At the early age of 17, Taylor rode on his first cattle drive north to Wyoming. He later repeated the feat with his brother Baxter. This time was different, in that Baxter and Taylor took up a homestead on Long Creek, some 60 miles from Lander, Wyoming.

Both Taylor and Trego met Cody when they worked on his ranch in Nebraska. Cody, thinking about putting together a "Wild West Show" was impressed by the great managerial ability of Trego and the horsemanship and showmanship of Taylor. He was a man of great stature, 6'4" tall, weighing around 300 pounds. All descriptions suggest that he was always noticed whenever he walked down a street. Soon after joining the show, Taylor was almost immediately featured as "King of the Cowboys".

Buck Taylor stayed with the Wild West Show for 17 years. He usually received top billing with Cody himself. His most famous act was that of a pick-up rider. Riding a small horse, he would reach down and pick up items from the ground, such a handkerchief or even a small dime. He also often substituted for Cody in the knife dueling with Indians. Usually paired with Yellow Hand,

"I used that redskin pretty rough at times, and I guess he was glad when I quite the show."

Taylor was part of the grand tours of Europe with the Wild West show. In 1887, he was greatly admired by Queen Victoria for his riding. (The command performance was part of the Queen's Jubilee.) He was also part of the tour in 1889 in Paris for the Paris Exposition, probably better remembered for the erection of the Eiffel Tower. This tour continued to Berlin, where there was a command performance for the Kaiser.

Trego was bitterly disappointed when he was forced to miss the first tour abroad. As the arrangements were being made, Cody's ranch manager in Cody, Wyoming quit. Trego was forced to stay behind and take over. However, during his time in Cody, he laid out the town and determined which buildings would be erected.

In 1896, Taylor felt he had enough and just quit, not knowing where he was going or what he was going to do. Whether he just had the urge to quit or was forced to quit due to the fact that he had formed a competing Wild West Show in 1894 is yet to be determined. One day, walking down the streets of Philadelphia, he ran into an old friend, John Betz, described as a millionaire brewer. Betz offered Taylor a job of managing his farm in Valley Forge. Taylor accepted without ever viewing the farm or knowing what he was contracting to do. (Trego returned at the same time, married Carrie Ash Hayes and farmed for a year before returning to the West.)

The years at Betzwood started out with some amount of trepidation. When Buck arrived, he found, among other things, a \$35,000 greenhouse, and 1000 acres which needed management. The farm had been losing \$25,000 a year. Taylor decided to hire specialists from all over so that each crop would be managed properly. In his first year as manager, the farm realized a profit of \$5,000. When the



WILLIAM LEVI "BUCK" TAYLOR

Continued from previous page

farm was sold in 1912 to Lubin for the purpose of using the scenery for making movies, Taylor bought General Varnum's headquarters at Valley Forge.

Taylor remained on his property until 1919, when the Valley Forge Park Commission was formed and wanted to regain lands to make Valley Forge State Park. Taylor sold and then went to Centre County where he had a very modern dairy farm of 230 acres, just 3 miles away from State College.

After selling his farm in 1921, Taylor was often seen around West Chester. Trego's wife hated the West and convinced Charlie to return to Chester County. They bought a farm near Guthriesville, which often wintered the animals from the show. After selling this farm, Trego bought property in Downingtown, first on Lancaster Avenue and later Manor Avenue. Taylor was a frequent guest during these years, and lived with them after selling a farm in Korner Ketch, purchased after the sale of the Centre County Property.

Descriptions of Taylor at this time include a man with long gray locks wearing a sombrero and clothes patterned after the Southwestern cattlemen. Because of his size, he often drew a crowd wherever he went.

Newspaper articles, based on interviews with Taylor in the 1920's, suggest that Taylor served in

the military and was part of Roosevelt's Rough Riders on San Juan Hill. In fact, Taylor boasted of being wounded in the battle, sustaining a wound to his lung, eliminating him from the war, and returning him to the Philadelphia area. However, scholarly research has never been able to prove this fact, and his name is absent of the official list of Rough Riders.

By his own admission, Taylor never used tobacco, but had been a fan of "strong drink". He claims that one day in 1903, he suddenly decided to quit and never touched another drop.

By the time of Taylor's death in April of 1924, little of his family remained. In fact, it is almost impossible to know what family he actually had. Finding Taylor in the 1910 census, as farm manager for Betz in Montgomery County, lists his marital status as divorced. Who the woman was or how long they had been divorced is unknown. It is also unknown whether or not he had any children. The funeral had to be postponed until his niece arrived from Wyoming. After the funeral held at Valley Forge Chapel, he was buried in the National Cemetery at Valley Forge.

His friend Charlie Trego lived another year, dying in January, 1925. Not getting the notoriety of the other celebrities of the show, Trego was a crack shot with a rifle. Visitors to his home in Gurthriesville were often treated to a demonstration showing that he could hit a one cent piece at 100 yards.

The likeness of Charlie Trego remains for all to see today in Fairmount Park. In 1907 the Fairmount Park Art Association commissioned Frederic Remington to do a bronze statue of a cowboy. Remington had moved to Montana in 1880 and while in the West met Charlie Trego. To Remington, Trego epitomized everything a cowboy was, including having a perfect physique. In 1907, Trego was living in the Downingtown area, which made it a perfect match for artist and subject.

So ends another chapter of the "Buffalo Bill Wild West Show." And to think that Chester County played a role in the saga!

*You and your family are cordially invited
to join in the activities for East Caln Township's*

East Caln Fest Our 275th Anniversary Celebration on

Saturday, September 20, 2003
7 a.m. ~ 5 p.m. at Bell Tavern Park

Fun, Food, and Celebration

5K Run/Walk Awards ~ 9:00 a.m.
Anniversary Garden Dedication ~ 10:30 a.m.

OPENING CEREMONY ~ 11:00 a.m.

5K Run/Walk 7-9
Pony Rides 10-2
Bike Safety 10-2
Basketball Foul Shoot 1-3
Storyteller 11-12
Clowns 11-3
Face Painting 10-3
Caricatures 12-4
Bounce Rides 9-5
Tethered Balloon Ride 9-11
Police Fingerprinting 9-5

Ashbridge House Tour 12-3
Colonial Re-enactments 11-3
Horseshoes 10:30-5
Tennis Exhibition 4-5
Square Dancing 12-1
Antique Car Display 9-5
Sweet Adelines 3-4
Folk Singers 11-12
Barber Shop Quartet 4-5
Crafts 11-3
Health Fest 1-5

Please note:

- There will be no parking in Bell Tavern Park. Parking will be allowed along Downing Road and adjoining streets.
- 5k Run/Walk applications and Anniversary Garden Paver forms may be picked up at the township office between the hours of 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. and 1:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. Monday - Friday or on the township website: at www.eastcalnrec.com.

Ashbridge House Restoration

by Carol Grigson

The Ashbridge House was deeded to the Downingtown Area Historical Society in December, 1999, to be renovated by them and used as the headquarters of the Society. The first year of ownership saw a massive effort to clean out the house so that renovations could take place. Over 50 tons of debris, primarily from the last occupants of the building, was removed from the house. Fireplaces had soot and skeletons of dead birds. All materials had to be sorted and examined to determine whether it related to the history of the house or was, in fact, trash.

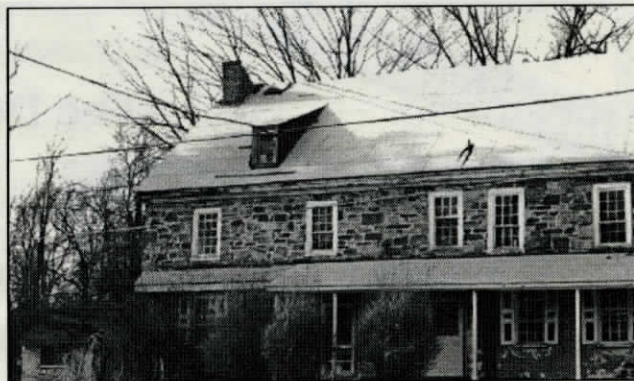
Meantime, if the Society was to apply for the prestigious Keystone Preservation Grant, the house had to qualify to be placed on the Historic Register. A massive application and report had to be compiled. Through the generous gift of time and effort of Dudley Lighty, the report was completed. It was sent to the State for certification. As a result of this work, the Society was given the opportunity to apply for a preservation grant.

Our first year of ownership was highlighted by planning, learning the basics of grant applications and cleaning out trash. Once the trash was removed, the Society used money from the treasury to begin the rebuilding of 5 chimneys, all of which were broken and non-functioning. The roof was leaking like a sieve, and further damage to the house occurred because of the weight of water. Our first fund raiser, "Raising the Roof" occurred in September, 2000 and launched us into making arrangements for the roof replacement.

The end of the year 2000 made us realize that hard work produced results. The chimneys were completed, arrangements to replace the roof were made, notification of the award of the prestigious Keystone Grant for Preservation was received, and notification of a grant from the Chester County Tourist & Convention Center was approved.

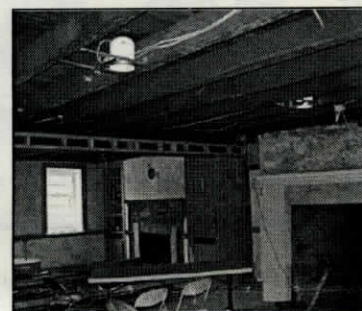
Though the pace seemed slow to those living through the process, we received additional grants to complete the exterior of the building and begin the process to install heating and air conditioning. We have now virtually restored the entire exterior to a 17th century farm house. The workhouse has also been restored.

Plans and work for the interior are well under way. A decision to remove much of the old plaster



was made for us when a ceiling, under a 20th century bathroom, collapsed and fell. One look at the dirt and mold told anyone looking that much of it would have to be removed and replaced. Thus, began the gargantuan job of removing old plaster, scraping the surface of the walls that were to stay, and getting most of the walls down to the old planking.

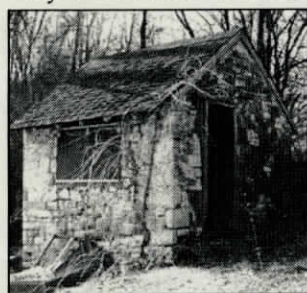
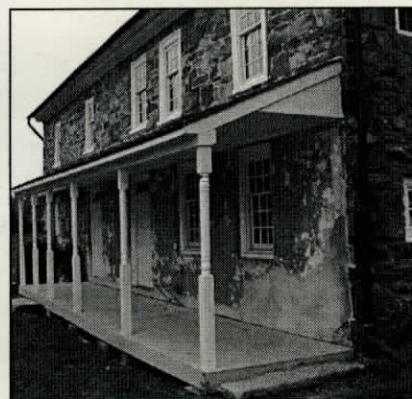
Some of the rooms have had their shape changed. Two rooms have been turned into one large meeting room. The library-research area had to be modified to accept computers and other aids for research. A wall had to be moved to get enough space for a handicapped restroom on the first floor.



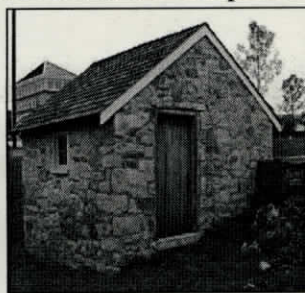
The work continues. Anyone walking about the rooms today has to do so with vision, as only a skeleton remains. In that skeleton are being placed the needs of the 21st century—wiring, heating/air-conditioning ducts, computer and phone terminals, security hook-ups, etc.

We are definitely in phase 2, the interior space. Planning for the entire building is ongoing. Hope to begin using part of the building in 2003 is strong.

Though the invitation has been extended many times previously, we again extend an invitation to anyone interested in helping with the house. We are reaching the phase where hands on help would be welcome and used. We need ideas and physical help. In this third year of ownership, you will know that you had a part in preserving one of the few continuously inhabited dwellings in Chester County (1709-1997).



Smokehouse before



Smokehouse after

Front porch during renovation

Great Gift Idea!

The Downingtown Area Historical Society proudly presents...

The Downingtown, Pennsylvania Tapestry Throw

"A Warm Memento"

Featuring the historic sites of Downingtown, Pennsylvania, this custom-designed throw is a wonderful accent to any chair, sofa, bed or table. It is sure to become a treasured heirloom. Woven in full color.

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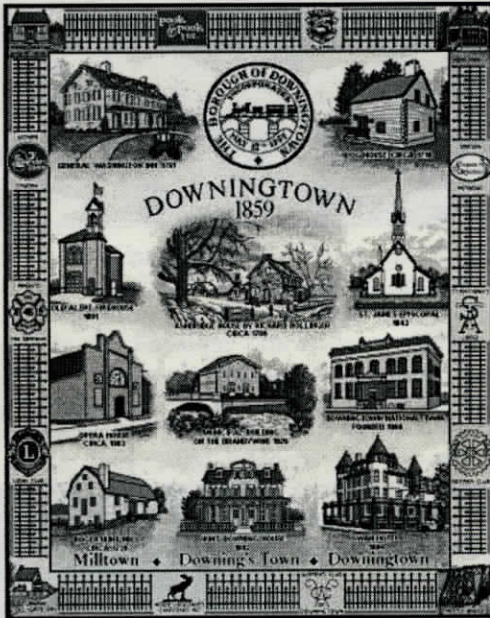
595 West Boot Road, West Chester, PA 19380

(610) 692-7024 or

The Downingtown Area Historical Society

P.O. Box 9, Downingtown, PA 19335

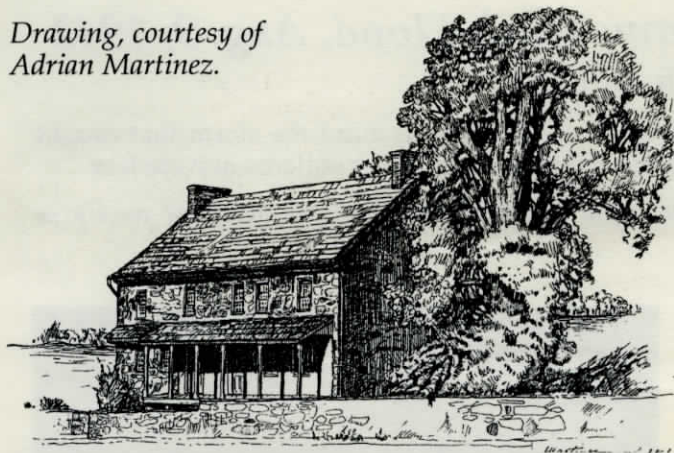
(610) 269-1167



Afghan orders may also be obtained from: The Downingtown Chamber of Commerce or you may go to the Web Site: <http://www.downingtownhistoricalsociety.org>

Downingtown Area Historical Society
P.O. Box 9
Downingtown, PA 19335

Drawing, courtesy of
Adrian Martinez.



The TURNPIKE TIMES

Volume 8, Number 3

Fall, 2003

A PUBLICATION OF THE DOWNINGTOWN AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The President's Message

by Roger Grigson

As the weather turns colder, our thoughts and actions turn towards the inside. This is especially true of the Ashbridge House now that the sprinkler and security systems, electrical rewiring and new plumbing have been completed. The heating/air-conditioning complex are almost done as well as the walls and ceiling which needed to be replaced after inserting the insulation. It will again begin to look like the dwelling which housed people since 1709.

We enjoyed all the people who visited us on September 20 during East Caln Fest, both at Bell Tavern Park and at the Ashbridge House. It is wonderful that so many of the people who have stories about the house, visit us and share their parts of history with us. We especially thank all the volunteers who made this all possible.

Our fall quarterly meeting will be held November 10 at Simpson Meadows. (details elsewhere in this newsletter). The speaker will talk about the movement of mail in Chester County. We hope to see as many as possible for this fine lecture.

Our fund raising projects are in full swing. Afghans are still for sale at \$55 each. We have begun taking Luminaria orders (details below) and calendars for 2004. All of us need to become a part of these things to make them a success.

We are on the edge of seeing real change within the Ashbridge House. We will finally have a headquarters from which to launch our projects. We hope we can use, at least a few of the rooms, by spring.

My very best wishes to you for the upcoming holiday season!



December 24th Luminaria

With the closing of the 9th grade center, there have been some changes in the luminaria program this year. Pickup will be on December 13 at Pook and Pook on Lancaster Avenue. To avoid a massive traffic jam, all block captains will be called in advance to be informed of the times of pickup.

We are excited about the program this year. We are hoping to include areas which previously have not been part of this celebration. The base has been redesigned so that the candle cannot fall out of the base. Putting in water for added stability is the choice of the homeowner.

Our goal is that so many candles will be on sidewalks, that one could drive through a neighborhood without lights. If you know of any areas which are not presently part of the program, would you please help us by calling with information to either Linda Wittig, 610-269-5977 or Carol Grigson, 610-269-1167.

Our Website: Thanks to the diligent efforts of Jay Byerly, DHS has an attractive, informative and expanded-upon website which is connected to several Chester County links by simply keying in "downingtown historical society" or <http://www.downingtownhistoricalsociety.org>

The Turnpike Times, ©2003 Downingtown Area Historical Society. Articles and information on events of historical interest welcomed, subject to editorial revision and approval. Send articles to DHS, P.O. Box 9, Downingtown, PA 19335. Membership: \$10 individual; \$15 family; \$5 senior, \$3 student.

Officers: Roger Grigson, president; Ernie Jameson, vice president; Carol Grigson, secretary; Wesley Sollenberger, treasurer. Board: Jay Byerly, Nancy D'Angelo, Lauren Fagan, Harry Helms, Bob Kahler, Dr. Richard Lehr, Ruth Lowe, Stella Parry, Thomas Roberts and Greg Wittig. **The Turnpike Times** Editors: Carol Grigson and Ruth Lowe.

Downingtown Inundated by Heavy Flash Flood, Aug. 9, 1942

Researched by Ruth Lowe

The recent flash floods on June 20, 2003 and September 15, 2003 bring to mind the storm that caught everyone off guard on August 9, 1942. Business houses, mills and many residences suffered severe loss.

The following story is a reprint of the news article in "The Archive", a newspaper published weekly in Downingtown – the August 13, 1942 issue.

Downingtown is slowly digging itself out from the results of the history making flood which completely inundated one third of the Borough last Sunday morning. Terrific rains throughout the previous night caused the Brandywine to be roaring through town at 8 AM. Danger was not anticipated as the rain had stopped. Therefore no effort was made to guard against the flooding that occurred an hour later which completely covered all the streets in the low lying parts of the town and began seeping into cellars and basements. An hour later Downingtown was facing a situation never before experienced in the Borough's recorded history.

An alarm was sounded and all firemen, auxiliary firemen and other Defense units were called out to cope with the rapidly increasing danger facing citizens and businesses. All traffic was halted and remained stalled until after past 2 o'clock in the afternoon.

Thousands of people quickly gathered at advantageous spots to watch the whirling devastating rush of the flood which continued to rise for an hour before reaching its peak. Residents began a frenzied effort to rescue automobiles, furniture and all kinds of merchandise, but losses will be enormous.



Brandywine Avenue looking toward center of town

Practically all the industrial plants in and around the borough were affected, and in some places the loss will reach many thousands of dollars. Perhaps the worst sufferer will be the Davey Paper Company, where many valuable motors and other machinery have been ruined as well as quantities of finished stock. At Bicking's Paper Company No. 1 mill some 60 tons of finished stock was ruined and considerable machinery badly injured. The No. 2 mill escaped any material damage. The No. 1 mill of the Downingtown Paper Company, which has been idle for some weeks, incurred

a loss from submerged machinery. The water rose three feet in the auxiliary plant of the Downingtown Iron Works [present day site of Eckerd Drug Store] and destroyed blueprints and other office equipment. Conditions at the plant of Collins & Aikman were not as bad as first reported, and the plant is operating as usual, although the highway in its vicinity was washed out.

Shryock Bros. Paper Mill at Dorlans also suffered extensively when flood water submerged the lower part of the mill, ruining much machinery and stock. The Creek Road [Rt. 282] is closed to traffic due to demolished bridges and numerous road cave-ins.



Park Lane heading toward the Kerr Park, just north of Center Square

In Coatesville the conditions were similar. The water in some places reached a depth of twenty-five feet and completely inundated the Luken's Steel plant shutting down operations. The damage there may reach a million dollars.

At the present time it is impossible to estimate the damage caused by the flood in Downingtown, but it will easily reach several hundred thousand dollars.

One of the hardest hit was Edward L. Towson, whose funeral home is located in the basement of his residence on Lancaster Avenue [presently Donohue Funeral Home]. Owing to the rapid rise in the water he was unable to rescue his hearse, a number of caskets and much other funeral paraphernalia. However a body prepared for burial was safely removed to the Keim & Wilson parlors.

J. W. Maxwell's hardware store and the Hess Restaurant were damaged considerably with three feet of water. Hundreds of dollars worth of merchandise in Maxwell's was completely ruined.

Water covered the main floor of the A&P store and the storage quarters in the rear ruining considerable merchandise. Four feet of water flooded the basement of the Municipal building including the jail, which fortunately had no occupants at the time.

The vaults in the concrete basement of the Downingtown National Bank were submerged causing a large quantity of money and checks



Center of town — Center Square (center building Downingtown National Bank)

deposited by merchants late Saturday night to be completely ruined.

At the showrooms of the Downingtown Motor Co., twenty-five new autos and stored autos were ruined by mud and water, and nearby Vollrath Coffee Shop was put out of business until Tuesday. The damage there was great.

Brandywine Avenue was hit harder than any other section of the town. In scores of homes water rose well above the first floor ruining furniture, rugs, etc. and a great many walls will have to be repapered. The Roosevelt Theatre was submerged and was closed for several days. The grocery store of G. H. Wagner (corner of Washington and Brandywine Avenues), suffered heavily from water soaked merchandise as well as the grocery store of Max Morris on Lincoln Highway. Mr. Morris' loss will reach close to \$1,000.

Ray G. Sheeler's Chevrolet garage also suffered heavily. The driveway was completely wrecked and pumps put out of commission.

Both the Baptist and Methodist churches suffered greatly from six to eight feet of water in their basements. It is feared that the new pipe organ at the Methodist Church has been ruined.

The only section of West Downingtown to be seriously affected was the lower end of Stuart Avenue where residences were submerged well above the ground floor. The situation here was similar to that experienced by the householders on Brandywine Avenue.



View from railroad tracks to present-day Johnsonstown Park



Lake formed on West Lancaster Avenue, looking from Pennsylvania Avenue, center left building is presently Donohue's Funeral Home

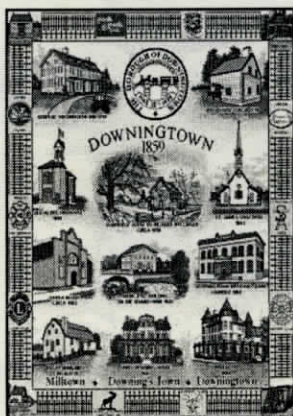
P.S. There have been many floods in Downingtown since 1942. The Marsh Creek Dam, a project of the 1960's and 1970's had helped but the Downingtown area has had a lot of development since then. Fortunately, the Downingtown Borough is working on the flood issue and is seeking a solution to prevent the damage that occurred in 2003.

**GREAT
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IDEA!**

*The Downingtown Area Historical
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The Downingtown, Pennsylvania Tapestry Throw "A Warm Memento"

Featuring the historic sites of
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QUARTERLY MEETING

NOVEMBER 10, 2003

will be held at Simpson Meadows
101 Plaza Drive, Downingtown

Refreshments at 7:00 p.m. • Speaker at 7:30 p.m.

William Schultz, whose topic will be: **"The
Movement of Mails in Chester County, from
1790-1900"**. Mr Schultz is a life member of the
Pennsylvania Postal History Society as well as
past president of the Phoenixville PA Stamp Club.



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