

# Happy Thanksgiving!



## Downingtown Area Historical Society Hist-O-Gram

*Interesting local history, accessed from our archives*

[www.downingtownareahistoricalsociety.org](http://www.downingtownareahistoricalsociety.org)

*The past is never done. It is not even past--William Faulkner*

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## Where and What Is This?



The first person to correctly identify the building on the left in the photo above will be recognized as a truly perceptive scholar. Please send your response to: [Info@downingtownareahistoricalsociety.org](mailto:Info@downingtownareahistoricalsociety.org).

# You can still buy Restaurant Raffle tickets

We will draw the winning ticket in our 3<sup>rd</sup> annual “A Taste of Chester County” Restaurant Raffle at 3 PM on Sunday, November 29. That means you can still buy a ticket online by accessing [www.downingtowntownareahistoricalsociety.org/TasteOfCCRaffle.html](http://www.downingtowntownareahistoricalsociety.org/TasteOfCCRaffle.html). Or you can purchase a ticket if you come to Ashbridge House, our 306-year-old headquarters, in the Ashbridge Square Shopping Center (next to the Chick-Fil-A Restaurant) on Route 30 in East Caln before the drawing.

The raffle winner will receive seven \$200 vouchers, with a total value of \$1,400, for meals at these fine, local restaurants: Amani’s BYOB, St. Anthony’s Restaurant, The General Warren Inn, The Kimberton Inn, The Orangery, The Bordley House Grille and The Downingtown Country Club. Vouchers are good for one seating at each restaurant. Exclusions may apply.

The second prize is a \$50 gift certificate from Pomodoro Pizza and Italian Restaurant in Downingtown, plus two bottles of wine from Phoenixville’s Black Walnut Winery.

Proceeds from the raffle will enable the Historical Society to continue repairing the leaking stone walls of Ashbridge House.

## What was happening here in December 1979

Noted below are news items originally published in the East Branch Citizen 36 years ago:

- About 300 **West Bradford** residents jammed the auditorium of the West Bradford School to hear how their properties and families were allegedly being threatened because waste materials were being dumped in the Strasburg Landfill in bordering Newlin Township. Although he refused to approve of a moratorium on the disposal, at the Strasburg Landfill, of increasing volumes of potentially dangerous materials, Clifford Jones, the secretary of the state Department of Environmental Resources agreed to review the special permits which had been granted in recent months, and not to grant any more permits until West Bradford and Newlin officials were notified. Jones also agreed to hold a public hearing on the landfill’s plan to increase the size of the operation from 22 acres to 200 acres.

- Two new directors, who replaced members who had decided not to run again, were named to the **Downingtown School Board**. They were Karen Kenworthy, of West Pikeland, who replaced Jonathan Kulp, and Edward Layton, of Upper Uwchlan, who replaced Melvin Cohen..

- Officers elected to the board of the **Exton Chamber of Commerce** included: Fronia Corry, editor of the *Suburban Advertiser*, president; Stephen Bierds, manager of the Andrews & Pinkstone Realty office in Exton, first vice president; Jim Knipe, owner of the Ship Inn, vice president; Dr. Donald Robbins, dentist, vice president; Howard Strong, Commonwealth Land Title Insurance, secretary; Carl Croft, CPA, treasurer; and directors Stephen Logan, Exton Florist; William Butler, attorney; Elton Haynes, Strawbridge & Clothier; and Ronald Williams, Exton Square.

- Recent **property transfers** included: 22 Dorothy Lane, Upper Uwchlan, \$79,900; 1128 Glenside Ave., West Bradford, \$ 72,000; 112 Taylor Mill Road, Uwchlan, \$79,022; 505 Thomas Road, Downingtown, \$47,900; 265 Cardigan Terrace, West Whiteland, \$45,500; One Independence Lane, East Brandywine, \$70,000; 106 Bondsville Road, Caln, \$52,000.

- Members of the Lutheran Church Women at **Messiah Lutheran Church**, Downingtown, for 30 years were Mary Bousum, Dorothy Brookover, Isabelle Collins, Lilliann Friedline, Anna Grube, Caroline Hadfield, Anne Lacey, Laura Lenhardt, Cora McClure, Naomi Miller, Belle Murray, Rhoda Robertson, Marvenia Shoemaker and Dixie Shirk.

- Nine members of the **DHS football team**, who were named to the All-Ches-Mont squad included: Ricke Stonewall, Brian Westmoreland, Ed Novak, Dave Kucera, Horace Sorenson, Carlo DiFrancesco,

Bob Ricci, Greg Wilson and Tom Quinn. And **DHS soccer** players Vince Forgione, Mark Mathis, Rob Hellhake and Jeff Davis were named to the All-Ches-Mont soccer squad.

- Residents of the Fox Ridge development in **West Pikeland** complained to township officials that the high-pitched noise from a neighboring farmer's corn dryers, which were running day and night, were a nuisance. Township supervisors said they were perplexed, because the corn dryer was an "agricultural use" in an agricultural county, and they would have little chance of success if the case were brought to court. They pressed the farmer to install baffles in the corn dryers as soon as possible.

- The **DHS boys' basketball team** was victorious over two Ches-Mont opponents, defeating Spring-Ford 69-46 and beating Pottsgrove 51-43. Bob Melvin (19 points), Brent Thompson (17) and Mark Redfern (14) led the Whippet offense in the Spring-Ford contest. The Pottsgrove game was a see-saw battle, until Downingtown iced a win with a six-point run in the fourth quarter. Coach Bob Boyer cited the stellar play of Alvin Walton and substitute Don Harlow.

- Although the **DHS girls' basketball team** lost a hard-fought, 49-47 game to Spring-Ford, Coach Ginny Davis's squad bounced back to beat Pottsgrove 51-46. Standouts for Downingtown in that fray were Tina Arcaro, 17 points and 21 rebounds, and Lisa Diehl, 12 points and 10 rebounds.

- Elected to the board of **West Bradford Youth Athletics Inc.** were Jim Hobbs, president; Scarlotte Hobbs, secretary; Sharyn McGann, treasurer; and directors Ken Klunk, Don Barber, Jim Strebler, Rick Carter, Jim Vorgang and Bob Wilson.

- Pat Webb (98 lbs.), Keith Grant (112) and Glenn Koser (126) recorded pins in the **DHS wrestling team's** match with Solanco. Highlight of the contest was Duane Koser's 145-pound match, which DHS coach Alray Johnson said, "was one of the best high school matches I've ever seen."

## It's at 1880 Art School Road in Chester Springs



Philip Hemcher is a truly perceptive scholar because he was the first person to correctly identify the house in the photo above as the one located at 1880 Art School Road in West Pikeland. For more info on the property, see: [www.zillow.com/homedetails/1880-Art-School-Rd-Chester-Springs-PA-19425/9164888\\_zpid/](http://www.zillow.com/homedetails/1880-Art-School-Rd-Chester-Springs-PA-19425/9164888_zpid/).

## How twin tunnels were built on Valley Creek Rd. in E. Caln



There are many mysteries connected with twin tunnels on Valley Creek Road in East Caln. Although there are many stories online about hangings and a suitcase stuffed with a woman's body parts, and the tunnels are purported to be haunted, we can't explain what was behind those mysteries. However, how the tunnels were constructed are no longer a mystery because Jim Sundman, a Downingtown resident and a railroad historian, did extensive research on the tunnels, and here's what he found:

*Valley Creek was one of five (I believe) significant water courses/gaps the Philadelphia and Columbia (P&C) Railroad had to cross on the railroad portion--Philadelphia to Columbia, PA--of the Main Line of Public Works. Although that section was surveyed in the late 1820s, the first bridge over Valley Creek wasn't built by the P&C until 1834. It was a wooden bridge and very susceptible to fire. In fact, it burned down in 1838, from the sparks of a passing locomotive. Incredibly, it was re-built in 19 days.*

*In 1860, the Pennsylvania Railroad (PRR) built an iron truss bridge over Valley Creek, replacing the wooden bridge that had been re-built in 1838. This bridge was replaced by the PRR in the 1880s with a large stone arch bridge when the railroad, which went through the Bradford Hills area, was realigned. That bridge was the first "tunnel" that you travel through when driving south on Valley Creek Road, from Boot Road. One arch is for the road and the other two arches are for the creek. The first tunnel doesn't look like you're going under a bridge now, but it has been like that for about 20 years.*

*The second "tunnel" was constructed around 1902-1904, as part of the PRR's Low-Grade freight line. Instead of creating a second bridge to cross the gap in the hills, the PRR filled in the gap and sort of made the two railroad sections (the PRR's Main Line and Low-Grade Line) into one unit. Another reason why the two railroad sections were created was because the Main Line tracks were elevated at the same time, and the south side of this elevation needed support. Before then, the Main Line tracks were about 5 feet above the top masonry course of the first tunnel. Later, the tracks were raised about 15-20 feet above the first tunnel's top masonry course.*

*The light shaft between the two tunnels was done for construction reasons. A space was needed between the two tunnels because they are two independent structures, running in slightly different directions. As you approach the tunnel from the south, it looks like Valley Creek Road was bored into the side of a large hill, but that isn't the case. The arch/tunnel was built first--*

*both for the road and a lower two-arched tunnel for Valley Creek. Then the entire area was filled in on top of the arches. Temporary tracks were built during the construction, to bring in the fill. It's hard to imagine how many train car loads of rocks and dirt were brought in to fill the space between the hills. It certainly looks natural, especially the view from the south, but this massive "hill" is entirely man-made.*

*I'm not familiar with who exactly worked on the tunnels. Since the first tunnel was constructed in the 1880s, the makeup of the workforce could have been different than the workforce that built the longer tunnel in the early 1900s. I've read in news clippings where laborers at this time tended to be Italian (late 1800s and early 1900s) and that Irish workers were predominant in the mid-1800s. But I can't say that definitively, or if that was true in this case.*

## **What area residents were talking about 92 years ago**

Noted below are news items originally published in *The Archive* during the winter months of 1923-24.

- Since providing service outside the borough was a contentious issue back then, J.M. Binder, chief of the **Downingtown Fire Department**, informed leaders of both borough fire companies of the geographic boundaries of their service areas. Those boundaries were: the Bell School, on the east; the Harbison-Walker brick works, on the north; East Brandywine Baptist Church, on the northwest; the Thorndale Store, on the west; and Kerr Paper Co., on the south. Also, the **Minquas Fire Co.** assumed responsibility for operation of the new ambulance service in Downingtown. The Businessmen's Club had recently purchased the ambulance. And members of the **Alert Fire Co.** were considering acquisition of land on West Lancaster Avenue, between Stuart and Downing Avenues, on which to build a new firehouse.

- Since the School Board felt that **student tardiness** "forms a bad habit in young people" in later life, School District officials focused a lot of attention on that issue 92 years ago. And that's why the school directors were concerned about the high total of 127 "tardy marks" recorded in September, as measured against the school system's total enrollment of 934 pupils. And 37 percent of those tardy marks were recorded against the high school's 181 students. Also, supervising principal (superintendent) A. B. Moyer reported that there were 46 students in the first grade at the new **East Ward School**, despite the fact that the classroom's capacity was 40 pupils, and Moyer acknowledged that no primary grade should have more than 25 students. Moyer also thanked the Home and School League for raising most (the School District provided the last \$16) of the funds needed to purchase a **\$450 piano** for the new school.

## **Here's how YOU can receive a Hist-O-Gram every week**

If you occasionally receive a pass-along copy of our Hist-O-Gram from a subscriber, you can receive a copy of our FREE Hist-O-Grams every week by accessing our website:

[www.downingtownareahistoricalociety.org](http://www.downingtownareahistoricalociety.org), and typing your email address into the sign-up box on the home page. We won't share or sell any email addresses. And you can access previously published Hist-O-Grams at: [www.downingtownareahistoricalociety.org/Histograms.html](http://www.downingtownareahistoricalociety.org/Histograms.html).

## Vintage Ad of the week:

# How To Save Coal!

Few people are familiar with the principles of hot air heating. They think if a heater does not heat it is the fault of the heater, but that is not often the case.

We laugh at an automobile built twenty years ago, but expect a hot air heater installed at that time to heat as well as the latest design in hot water, steam, vapor or other heating systems.

You can have heat with less coal by having your heater changed so that it will conform to the modern methods of hot air installations.

Constant study of the problems and experience enable me to help you to get more out of the coal you burn.

You cannot afford to waste coal now when it is scarce and the price so high.

A line or a call will assure you prompt attention.

**ELLIS R. WARREN**

**Hot Air Heating, Roofing, Spouting, Stovepipe, Etc.**

**LANCASTER AVE., EAST DOWNTOWN, PA.**

This ad was published in the December 6, 1922 edition of *The Archive*.

*Officers of the Downingtown Area Historical Society are: Parry Desmond, president; Ernie Jameson, vice president; Marion Piccolomini, recording secretary and Carol Grigson, treasurer. The board of directors includes: Harry Helms, Mike Dunn, Francine Dague, Phil Dague, Donna Capriotti and Annette Bethke.*

# Our Wish List

The items listed below in our Wish List notes the materials with a Downingtown connection, the Historical Society especially needs to reach its archival goals.

- A copy of Barbara Carlson Travaglini's History of St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Downingtown.
- All DHS yearbooks published since 1964. And any yearbooks or newspapers published by DHS, or by Downingtown and Lionville Junior High Schools.
- Any printed materials related to: the Downingtown Young Whippets, Downingtown Little League, Downingtown Babe Ruth League or the Downingtown American Legion Baseball teams, and the Downingtown Girls' Softball League, the Lionville Youth Association, the West Bradford Youth Association, or the East Brandywine Youth Athletics.

If you need more info about any of these requests, please send an email to:

[Info@downingtowntareahistoricalociety.org](mailto:Info@downingtowntareahistoricalociety.org).

## Free Ads for Non-Profits

### *Christmas Carol Program*

The Old Caln Historical Society's annual Candlelight Christmas Carol program will be held at the Old Caln Meetinghouse, Route 340, Thorndale, at 7 PM on Tuesday, December 1. Music will be provided by the Caln School Chorus, the Belltones and Redmen, a select group from the CASH Meistersingers, and by Kevin Pierce, well-known local vocalist. The program is free and the public is invited to attend. Light refreshments will be served after the program. Supervised parking is available. For more information, call 610-384-8153.

### *Candlelight Tour*

There will be a Candlelight Tour at Hibernia Mansion in Hibernia Park, on Park Road, Coatesville, from 6:30 PM to 9 PM on Friday, December 4 and Saturday, December 5, and from 2 PM to 4 PM on Sunday December 6. There will be refreshments and having live holiday music. Also, Santa Claus will be there. Admission is \$5; children under 12 are free. For more info, call 610-383-3812.

### *Borough Christmas Activities*

Santa will be at the Log House on East Lancaster Avenue from 1-4 PM on Saturday, December 5. The event will be hosted by the Downingtown Historic Commission. And the Downingtown Good Neighbor Christmas Parade, with eight marching bands, will be held on Lancaster Avenue at 3 PM on Saturday, December 12. For details, see: [www.dtownchristmas.com/](http://www.dtownchristmas.com/).

### *Tree Lighting*

East Brandywine Township will have a Holiday Tree Lighting in the East Brandywine Community Park on Dilworth Road at 3 PM Sunday, December 6. Children will make ornaments and hang them on the tree. Refreshments: hot chocolate and cookies. Bring canned goods for the Lords Pantry, or hats and gloves for the Salvation Army, and you'll get a chance to "throw the switch" and light the tree.

### *Talbots helps Library*

Talbots will donate to the Downingtown Library 10% of pre-tax sales on purchases at its store, Brandywine Square, 1096 E. Lancaster Ave., East Caln, from 3 PM to 9 PM Thursday, December 10.

### *Wreaths Across America*

Hopewell Cemetery, at 852 Hopewell Road, Downingtown, will be the site of the Wreaths Across America program at 11 AM on Saturday, December 12. This is a national day of recognition where wreaths are placed on the graves of veterans across the country, and this will be the second year that Hopewell has participated. You are invited to come

and help or observe this incredible site. If you have a veteran relative buried at Hopewell and you would like to place their wreath, contact Linda Mento at [OCityLinda@aol.com](mailto:OCityLinda@aol.com) or call 484-798-5520.

***Brochure on DARC classes & activities***

You can gain access to the latest DARC brochure, listing all classes and activities, at: [www.darcinfo.com](http://www.darcinfo.com). 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.

***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, [www.josephspeople.org](http://www.josephspeople.org), 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: [JPCheryl@verizon.net](mailto:JPCheryl@verizon.net).

***Banquet room for rent***

The Downingtown (Williamson) Masonic Lodge, a non-profit organization located at 210 Manor Ave. has a Banquet Room for rent. The area is perfect for parties of up to 80 people and has a full kitchen. Rental fees are reasonable. Call 610-269-3555 for more information.