

# Downingtown Area Historical Society *History Notes*

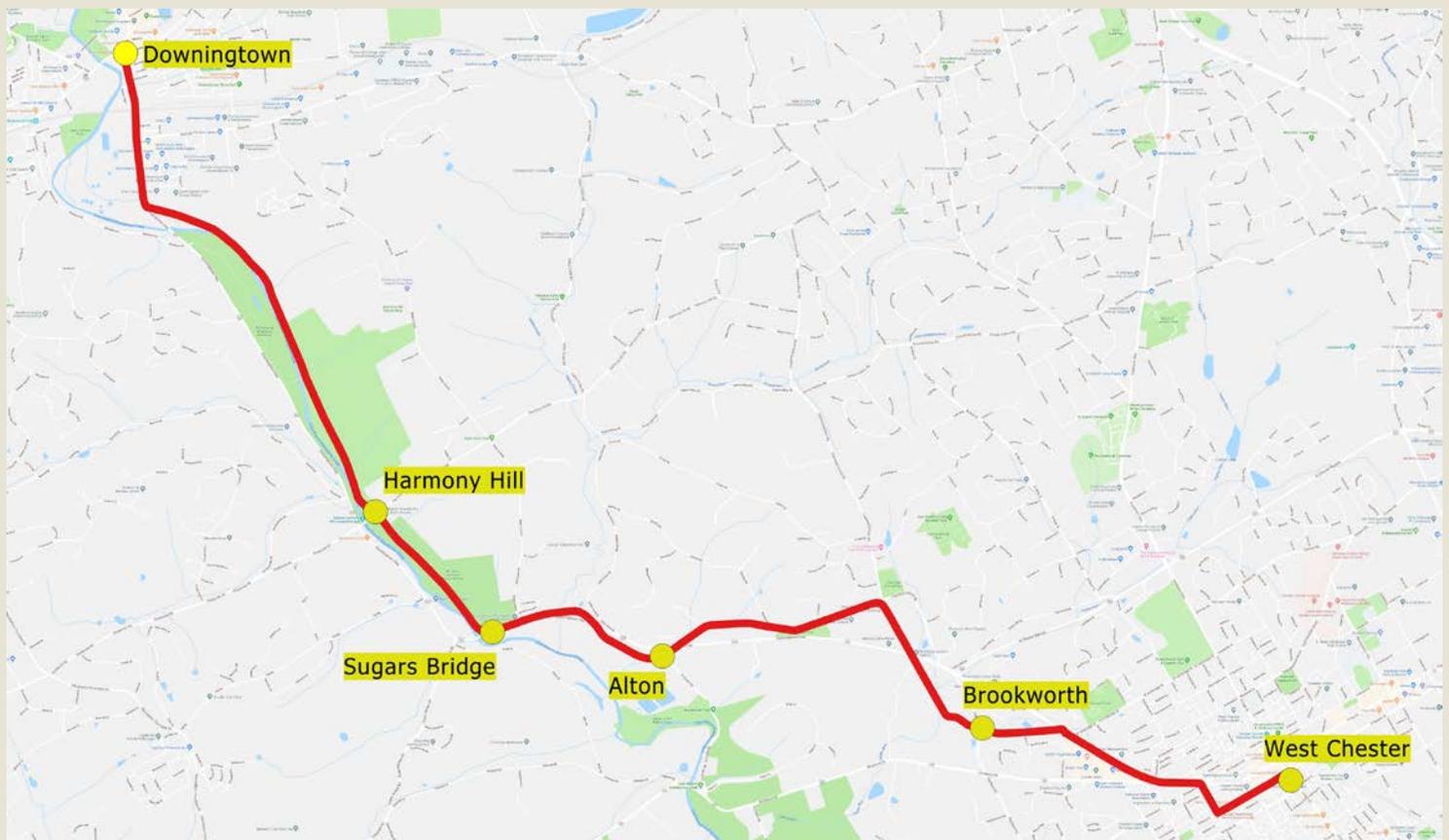
Interesting bits of Downingtown area history

June 13, 2019

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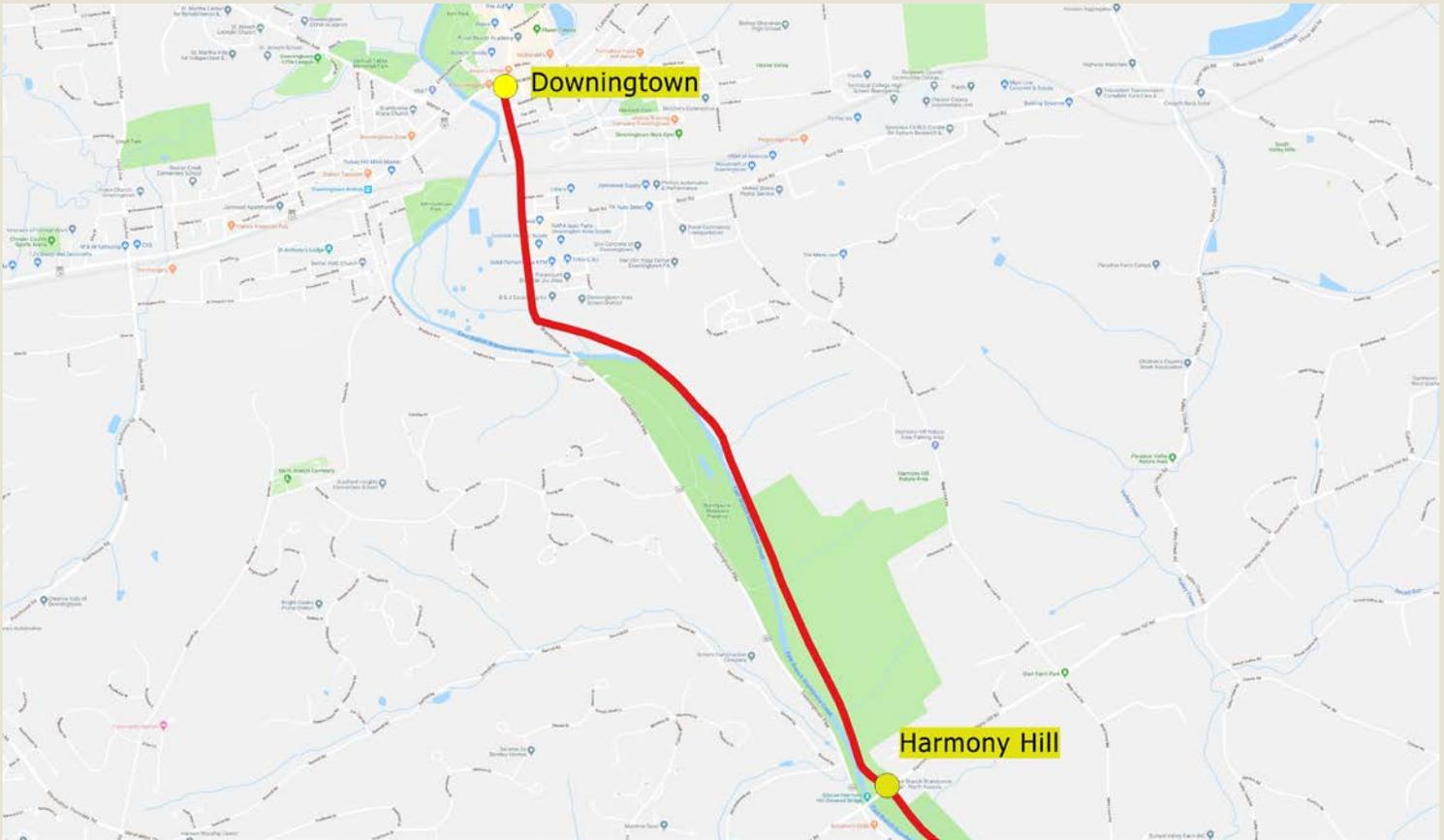
## Tracing the Trolley Line – Part 3

This is the last of a three part *History Notes* series where we trace the old trolley line between West Chester and Downingtown, showing features of the nearly nine-mile line that can still be seen. The route of the trolley, which was in operation from 1902 to 1929, is seen on the map below. The first part of the series covered West Chester to Alton, followed in the next issue by Alton to Sugars Bridge. We conclude in this issue with the last section between Harmony Hill and Downingtown. In 1906, the trolley was extended from Downingtown to Coatesville, but ran entirely on the Lincoln Highway, and, as far as we know, there is nothing left to be seen of this section. The increase in automobile usage, along with improved roads, spelled doom for many trolley systems, including this one. Even though the last trolley between West Chester and Downingtown ran in 1929, the rails weren't pulled up until the mid-1940s. However, we've also heard that some may still be underneath Brandywine Avenue.



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The map below shows the final segment of the trolley line from West Chester to Downingtown. It was about 2.7 miles from the Harmony Hill Station to the Swan Hotel in the center of Downingtown. Currently, the eastern third of this section lies in the Harmony Hill Nature Area. The middle third is on a private road called Trolley Road. The last third is on Brandywine Avenue/Route 322.



Right is a 1907 timetable for the West Chester Street Railway Company which operated not only between Downingtown and West Chester (right side) but also between West Chester and Kennett Square (left side). The Downingtown side of the timetable includes the trolley to Coatesville which at the time was operated by the Coatesville Traction Company.

The scheduled operating time between Downingtown and West Chester was 35-40 minutes but could take longer depending on conditions. After Route 322 was completed in the late 1920s, an auto trip took probably half that time.

West Chester, Lenape and Kennett Square					
Running time 55 minutes. Distance 14 miles.					
Six (6) fares between West Chester and Kennett Square.					
Leave West Chester	Leave Lenape	Arrive Kennett Sq.	Leave Kennett Sq.	Leave Lenape	Arrive West Chester
A. M.	A. M.	A. M.	A. M.	A. M.	A. M.
6 00	6 20	6 55	7 00	7 33	7 55
6 20	6 38		7 00	7 33	7 55
7 10	7 28	8 00	8 00	8 33	8 55
8 00	8 20	8 55	9 00	9 33	9 55
9 00	9 20	9 55	10 00	10 33	10 55
10 00	10 20	10 55	11 00	11 33	11 55
11 00	11 20	11 55	12 00	12 33	12 55
P. M.	P. M.	P. M.	P. M.	P. M.	P. M.
12 00	12 20	12 55	1 00	1 33	1 55
1 00	1 20	1 55	2 00	2 33	2 55
2 00	2 20	2 55	3 00	3 33	3 55
3 00	3 20	3 55	4 00	4 33	4 55
4 00	4 20	4 55	5 00	5 33	5 55
5 00	5 18	5 55	6 00	6 33	6 55
6 00	6 20	6 55	7 00	7 33	7 55
7 00	7 20	7 55	8 00	8 33	8 55
8 00	8 20	8 55	9 00	9 33	9 55
9 00	9 20	9 55	10 00	10 33	10 55
10 00	10 20	10 55	11 00	11 33	11 55
*11 00	*11 20	*11 55	*12 00	*12 30	*12 55

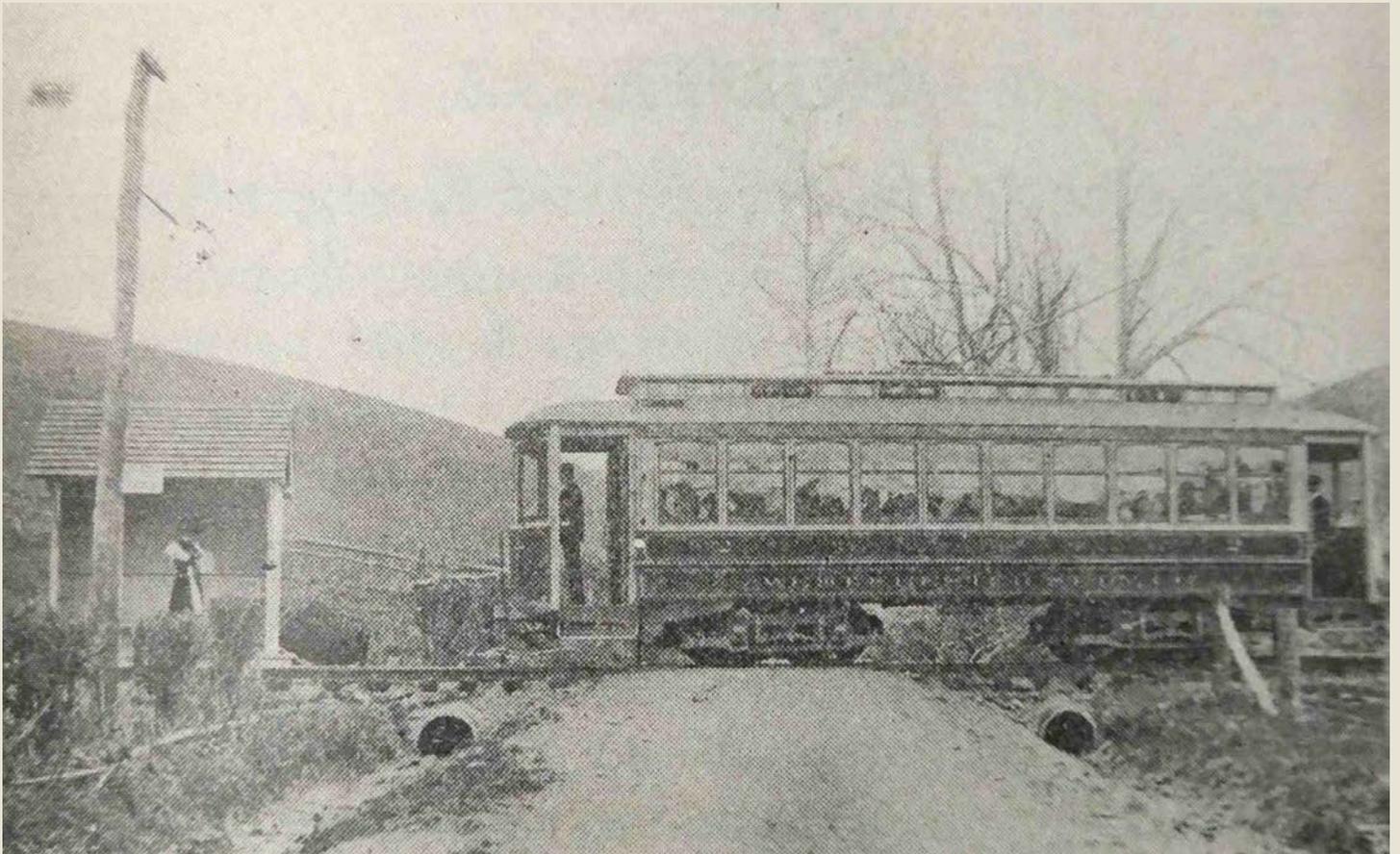
\*Saturday Night only  
P. & R. trains leave Lenape going South at 6.50, 9.25 A. M.; 5.21 P. M. Sundays, 6.50, 10.42 A. M.; 5.21 P. M. Going north, leave Lenape at 8.33 A. M.; 3.13, 6.02 P. M. Sundays, 9.06 A. M.; 3.13, 6.02 P. M.  
Trolleys at Kennett Square for Wilmington, Avondale and West Grove.  
Six (6) tickets for 25c, good between Kennett Square and West Chester; West Chester and Downingtown.

West Chester, Downingtown and Coatesville					
Distance 14 miles.					
Coatesville Traction Co., operating between Downingtown and Coatesville. Tickets of West Chester Street Railway not good between Downingtown and Coatesville. Three fares between West Chester and Downingtown. Fare from Downingtown to Coatesville, 10c.					
Leave West Chester	Leave Downingtown	Arrive Coatesville	Leave Coatesville	Leave Downingtown	Arrive West Chester
A. M.	A. M.	A. M.	A. M.	A. M.	A. M.
4 35	5 10	.....	.....	5 15	5 55
.....	.....	.....	*6 00	*6 23	*6 55
*5 40	*6 12	*6 37	7 00	7 23	7 55
x6 00	x6 32	x6 57	8 00	8 23	8 55
*6 20	*6 52	*7 17	9 00	9 23	9 55
7 00	7 35	7 57	10 00	10 23	10 55
8 00	8 35	8 57	11 00	11 23	11 55
9 00	9 35	9 57	12 00	12 23	12 55
10 00	10 35	10 57	11 00	11 23	11 55
11 00	11 40	12 10	11 25	11 55	12 30
P. M.	P. M.	P. M.	P. M.	P. M.	P. M.
11 50	12 30	1 00	12 10	12 40	1 20
P. M.					
12 40	1 20	1 50	1 00	1 30	2 10
1 30	2 10	2 40	1 50	2 20	3 00
2 20	3 00	3 30	2 40	3 10	3 50
3 10	3 50	4 20	3 30	4 00	4 40
4 00	4 40	5 10	4 20	4 50	5 30
4 50	5 30	6 00	5 10	5 40	6 20
5 40	6 20	6 50	6 00	6 30	7 10
6 30	7 10	7 40	6 50	7 20	8 00
7 20	8 00	8 30	7 40	8 10	8 50
8 10	8 50	9 20	8 30	9 00	9 40
9 00	9 40	10 10	9 20	9 45	10 30
10 00	10 35	11 00	10 10	10 40	11 20
11 00	11 35	12 00	11 00	11 25	12 05

\*Not run Sunday. xSunday only.  
Trolleys from Coatesville to Parkersburg.

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The top image below shows a westbound trolley crossing Harmony Hill Road and getting ready to stop at the small shelter that served as the Harmony Hill Station. This was the last official stop before Downingtown. The image at the bottom shows what the same view looks like today.



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West of Harmony Hill Road, the East Branch Brandywine Trail follows the old trolley line for a short distance. Here, part of the line was originally constructed closer to the ridge to the north (where the cyclist has veered off the main trail in the image below) but was straightened at one point. The bottom image was taken during the early spring looking east when the old line was much easier to see.



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It's difficult to see in the top image below, but about one quarter mile west of Harmony Hill Road, the East Branch Brandywine Trail no longer runs on top of the old trolley line. The trail veers slightly to the north but still parallels the trolley line which can be seen during the winter months. The bottom image was taken just west of the East Branch Brandywine Trail's bridge over the Brandywine Creek. Here the trolley line was carved out of the steep hillside along the creek.



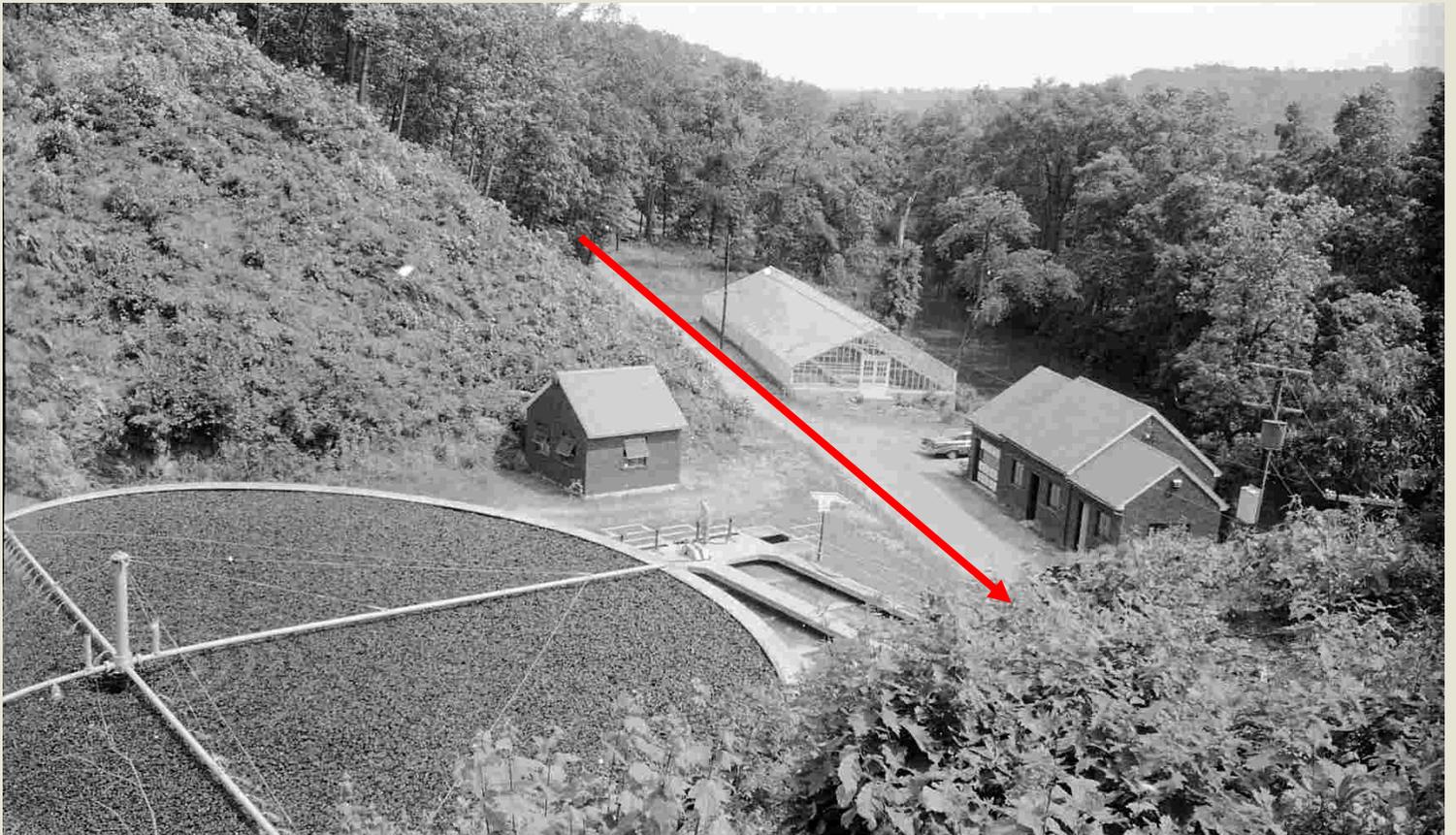
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When the trolley tracks were taken up in the 1940s they left at least one tie in the ground as seen in the top image below. It would be great to save this! The bottom image shows the remains of another small stone bridge that crossed one of the intermittent streams that flow into the Brandywine.



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During the winter months, from the trail on the west side of the Brandywine, you can make out the old trolley line across the creek (top image). The bottom image taken in 1958 shows the old Downingtown sewage treatment plant on Trolley Road. The red arrow indicates where the trolley ran.



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The postcard image below top shows the Trestle Bridge soon after it opened in 1906. However, the image also captures a trolley car on its way to (or maybe from?) Downingtown. The image at the bottom was taken from the Trestle Bridge and also shows the trolley line with a car running. This photograph appeared in Wilmer MacElree's 1912 book *Down the Eastern and Up the Black Brandywine*.



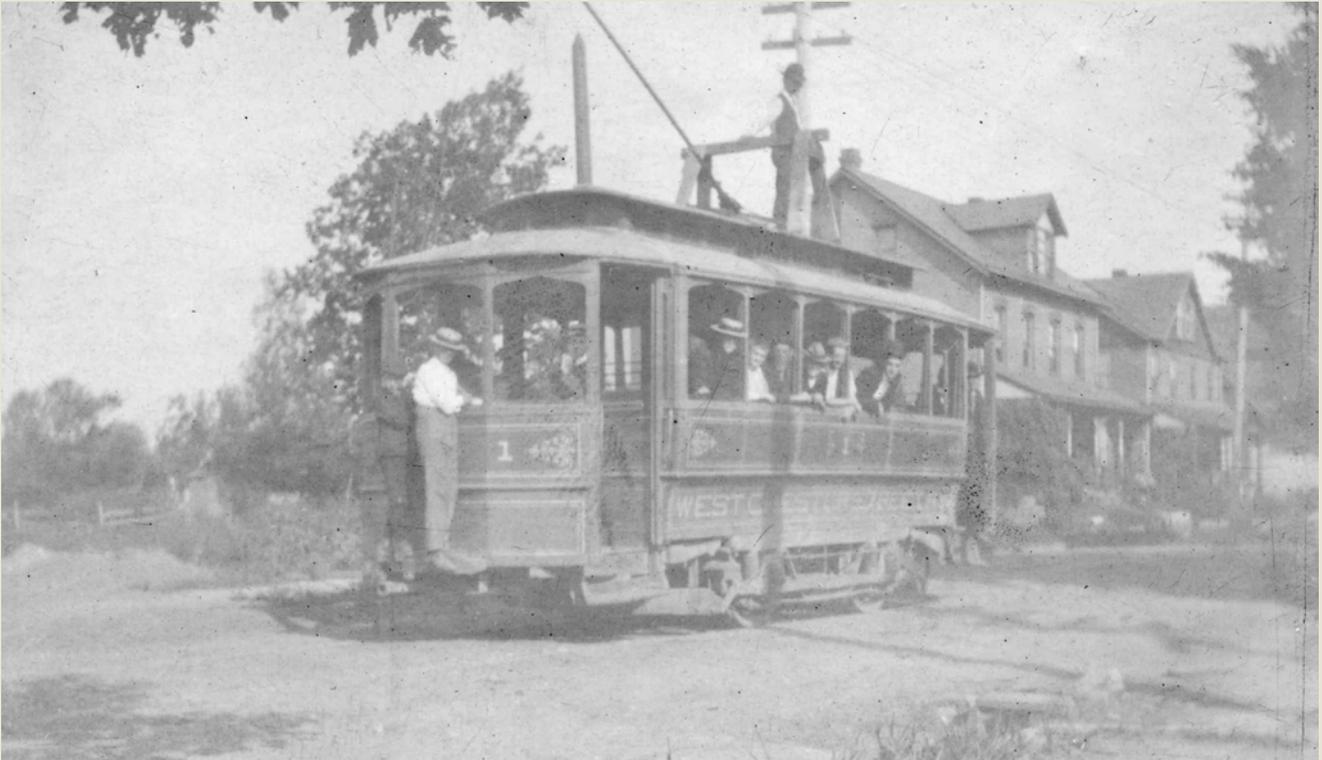
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The top image below shows the beginning of Trolley Road (which is private) at Route 322. The Trestle Bridge can be seen in the background through the trees. The house in the bottom image is a bit of a mystery. It's on Washington Avenue (we've been told it may have been moved there) and that it is somehow associated with trolley. It's unique design shows it may have had another use but we do not have any documentation that definitely ties it to the trolley. If anyone has more information on this home, please let us know.



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The top photograph below shows the trolley on Brandywine Avenue. The image was probably taken in 1902, the first year of its operation. We know this because the Downingtown Opera House, as seen in the modern image (bottom) taken from the same position, was built in 1903. In the old image it is a vacant lot. The two twin homes on the north side of the Opera House can be seen in both images.



This concludes our Tracing the Trolley line series. Hopefully you've been able to see that a lot of the West Chester-Downingtown trolley line can still be seen in many places, even though the last trolley ran 90 years ago.

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## Last Issue's Mystery Pic

**Shelley Francies** is truly a perceptive scholar because she was the first person to identify the location below as the former Earl Miller Farm on Rock Raymond Road by Hopewell Road in East Brandywine Township.



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## Downingtown Area Mystery Pic

Can you identify the location in the photograph below? The first person to correctly identify the location of this photo will be recognized as a truly perceptive scholar. Please send your response to: [dahs19335@gmail.com](mailto:dahs19335@gmail.com).



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# Advertisements for Non-Profits

## ***Uwchlan Township Historical Commission***

The Uwchlan Township Historical Commission will open the Edith P. Moore Schoolhouse (9 North Village Avenue, Lionville) and the John Cadwalader House (21 North Village Avenue, Lionville) on the first Sunday of each month, April through November. Hours for both are 2PM-4PM.

## ***Lyme Disease Association of Southeastern Pennsylvania***

The Lyme Disease Association of Southeastern Pennsylvania, an education and support group for patients and caregivers who have been affected by Lyme Disease, will meet Wednesday, April 17, 2019 at 7PM at the Kennett Friends Meeting House on PA Rt 82 (125 W. Sickie St., Kennett Square, PA 19348). This will be a special support meeting to answer your questions, share your experiences, and meet others who are battling Lyme Disease. Meetings are free and all are welcome. Check [www.lymepa.org](http://www.lymepa.org) for directions.

## ***Chester County Marine Corps League Detachment***

BINGO on the first and third Saturday of every month, 420 Chestnut Street. Public welcome. Kitchen opens at 5:30, Bingo Cards on sale at 6:00, Early Bird Special 6:30. Food is available for purchase. Funds used by the Marine Corps League and Marine Corps League Ladies Auxiliary to help veterans from all branches of the service as well as others in the community.

## ***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.

## ***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](mailto:cheryl.spaulding@josephspeople.org).

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## Historical Society's Wish List

The Downingtown Area Historical Society is a non-profit organization proudly maintaining the 310-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 office supplies including:
  - Pens and pencils
  - Scotch tape and masking tape
  - Copier paper (both color and white)
  - 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!



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### Downingtown Area Historical Society

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610-269-1709

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<https://www.downingtownhistory.org>

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