



Downingtown Area Historical Society *History Notes*

Interesting bits of Downingtown area history

April 11, 2019

Volume 2, Issue 7

Homeless Family of Nine Sleeps in Borough Council Chambers

The night of Monday, April 26, 1948 was routine for Downingtown policeman Chris Scrafford – until the Malone family walked into the station at 9:30 pm.

Antonio (Tony) Malone was born in Italy in 1906 and emigrated to the United States with his parents in 1910. The family settled in Chicago. In 1930, Tony married Jessie Bonicontrò and they welcomed their first child, a daughter named Palma Marie (nicknamed Dolly), the following year. In 1934, with jobs scarce in Chicago due to the Depression, the family moved east and settled in Downingtown where Tony had relatives. He took a job with the Downingtown Paper Company and the family rented the small home at 164 East Church Street.

By 1948 the family grew to include seven children. Tony was still employed with the Downingtown Paper Company and was working as a beaterman in one of the company's mills. Also by this time, the Malones had moved from their home on East Church Street and were renting the home at 17 Viaduct Avenue from Tony's cousins the DiAntonio's. But in April of that year, the DiAntonio's evicted the Malones – their own relatives – from the home so they could rent it to other family members.

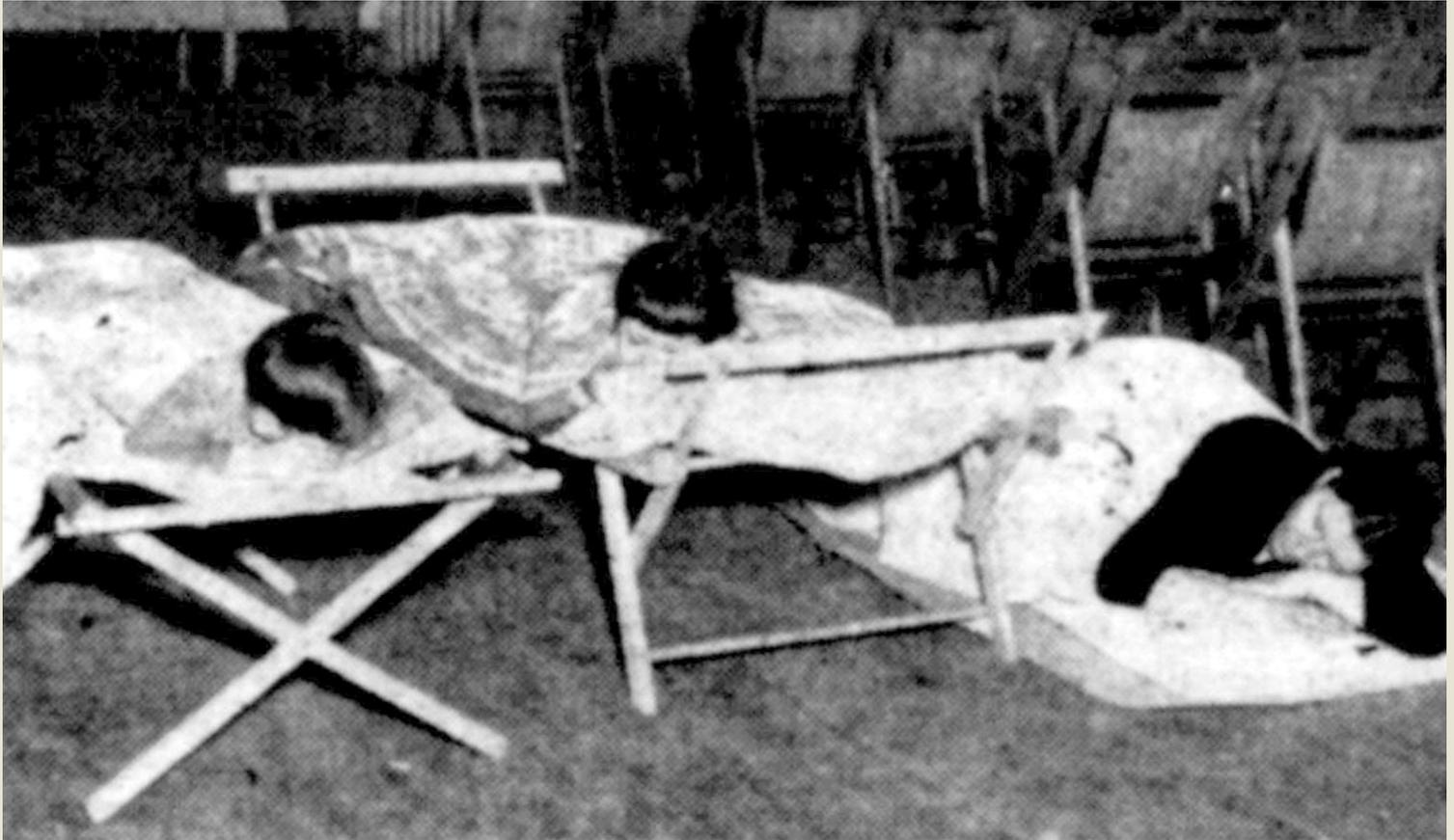
The Malones hired a moving company and their belongings were packed and moved to a Coatesville storage facility. At the invitation of neighbor Mrs. Walter Glauner, the large Malone family moved in with her until they could find another home. But Mrs. Glauner's landlord threatened her with eviction if the Malone's did not move out. The Malone's ended up on the street, living out of their suitcases. At least one night was spent sleeping on the benches in Kerr Park. They eventually went to the police station.



The Malone family of nine lived in this house at 17 Viaduct Avenue in Downingtown in 1948. They were evicted and became homeless when the home was rented to others.

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As the Malone's were discussing their plight with Officer Scafford, their five-year-old daughter Virginia (Ginny) fell asleep on a bench in the station. The sympathetic Scrafford called Ray Greenleaf, a member of Downingtown's Family Agency Committee, who in turn called Alice Dashiell, who headed the agency in Chester County. Blankets and cots were brought in from nearby homes and Borough Council chambers were transformed into an impromptu dormitory where the Malone's spent the night.



This photograph of Jessie Malone and two of the Malone children sleeping in Downingtown's Borough Council chambers appeared in the May 6, 1948 issue of the Downingtown Archive.

The following night the Malone's returned to the Downingtown police station, but before the family settled in for the night, Ralph Emery, the principal of West Ward School and his wife Elizabeth took in two of the Malone boys in their Stuart Avenue home. Elizabeth McIlvaine and Jane Baker housed the other five children in their home at 517 East Lancaster Avenue. After this the children spent several nights at a juvenile home in West Chester and were taken back and forth to school in Downingtown by Downingtown Police Sergeant Joe Newlin. The oldest child Palma (Dolly) eventually stayed with the owners of the restaurant where she was working. The second oldest child Angelina (Angela) was able to stay with a friend. Perhaps showing some sympathy for their relatives, the DiAntonio's allowed Tony, Jessie, and several of the children who were not already housed to stay in their barn in the Johnsontown section of Downingtown.

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Right, Tony and Jessie Malone and daughter Palma (Dolly) in 1933.



But the family couldn't find a permanent home. "My wife and I hunted everywhere for a place to live, but couldn't find any place where they'd take a family with seven children," Tony Malone said. Even Huston McIlvaine, President of the Downingtown Paper Company where Malone was employed, tried to assist the family in purchasing a piece of land in order to build a home, but unfortunately this didn't work out.

The family eventually gave up and decided to move back to Chicago where they rented a home on Madison Street. Unable to afford the travel costs for the entire family, Jessie and three of the children went back first. Tony and two of the children eventually followed. Angela stayed in Pennsylvania with her friend and worked for a year before returning to Chicago. Dolly stayed in Pennsylvania, got married, and had four children. Tony Malone died in 1962 at age 55. Jessie died in 1999. She was 87.



Above, Angelina, Ginny, Anthony, Michael, and Emilio Malone pose for a picture in Kerr Park circa 1944.

Below, Angelina, Palma, Anthony, and Michael Malone are seen by the stoop of their home at 164 East Church Street, circa 1940.



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We are very grateful to **Karen Anderson**, daughter of Angelina and granddaughter of Tony and Jessie Malone, who provided pictures of the family as well as filled in a lot of missing pieces to this story. Thank you Karen!!



Left are Anthony, Michael, and Emilio Malone in a picture taken circa 1945. The picture was probably taken in Kerr Park or the open land that became Johnstown Park.

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

1871 – A student attending Abraham Fetter’s Edgefield Institute in Uwchlan Township needed money to stay in school. He paid pay his tuition by trapping and selling polecat skins. We’re not exactly sure what a polecat was, but it could have been a ferret or skunk.

1880 – When the overseer of the Pennsylvania Graphite Company’s mine in Upper Uwchlan dropped by the mine at two o’clock in the morning on February 1, he found eight of the nine mine’s employees asleep. According to a newspaper article, “the sleepy fellows were discharged.”

1888 – E. Vinton Phillips took a much-needed trip to Florida after his successful campaign running for Assistant Burgess in Downingtown. He brought back several live alligators.

1904 – In December, Oliver Harris and Charles Blanning set a record at the Downingtown Glass Works by blowing 415 dozen perfect bottles in one day.

1914 – At a meeting of the Civic Association of Downingtown a resolution was adopted asking Borough Council for a curfew ordinance. The resolution was for children under the age of 16 to be off the streets by 8 p.m. from October 1 to April 1, and by 9 p.m. the rest of the year.

1924 – In August, “Shade” Griffith, a convict who escaped from a South Carolina chain gang, was caught in Downingtown and extradited back south. Detective C.S. Carmichael was paid \$50 reward for capturing Griffith. Griffith was serving a 20-year sentence for manslaughter.

Downingtown Area Group Photo



Pictured above is the Downingtown High School class of 1954 on top of Rockefeller Center taken during their senior trip to New York.

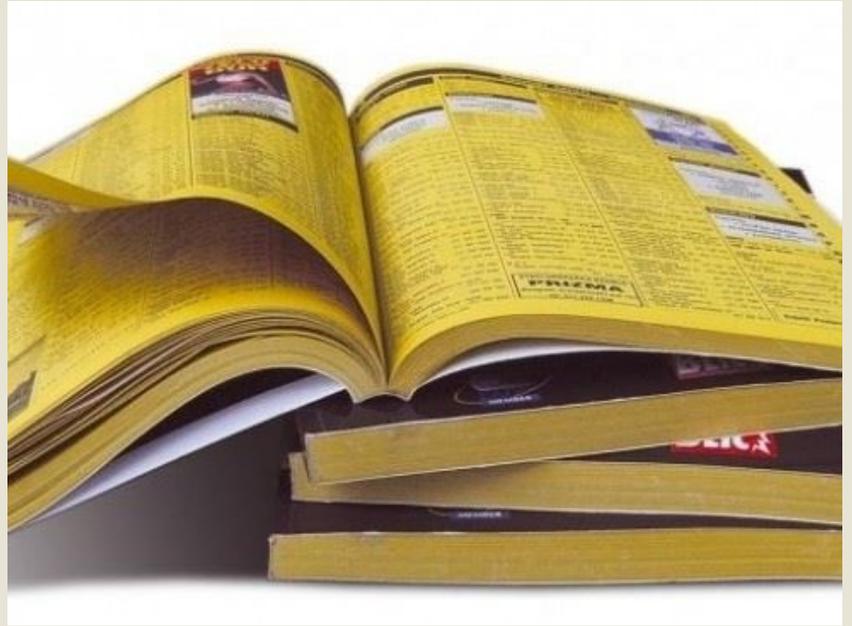
Do You Have...?

Just in case you missed it in the last issue...do you have a dolly/hand truck that you would like to donate to the Historical Society? We could certainly use one at the Ashbridge House. Email us and let us know at dths1709@gmail.com. Thank You!!!



Old Phone Books?

Do you have old phone books in your home that include listings for the Downingtown area? Recently we were trying to help someone locate the name of a medical professional who practiced in Downingtown in the early 1980s and if we had a phone book from that period it might have answered the question. We have a handful of directories/phone books up to the early 1960s but it would be great if we had a few more recent ones (1960s through the 1980s). Phone books can be great tools for historic research. Let us know!



Downingtown Area From Above

This photograph taken in 1966 faces north and shows the area in the center of Downingtown along the Brandywine Creek.



Last Issue's Mystery Pic

Mike Pollock is a truly perceptive scholar because he was the first person to identify the image below as the buildings and grounds of the Newcomen Society on Newcomen Road in Uwchlan Township. A number of other readers also guessed the location. However, quite a few readers also thought it was the Church Farm School in West Whiteland Township.

The Society was founded in 1923 in New York by F.W. Loree, but made its headquarters in Philadelphia. Its first president was Charles Penrose. In the 1940s, the headquarters was moved to this location in Chester County. The Society was named after Thomas Newcomen, an inventor of steam engines who was born in Dartmouth, England in 1663. It was established to preserve and promote the American free enterprise system and to honor engineering and technology firms that promoted this system. Over the years, membership in the Society declined, and in 2001 the Exton campus was sold. The Society closed for good in 2007. Makoto Martial Arts owns two of the parcels on the former Society's ground and allowed us to use this photograph

The headquarters buildings included a library, a museum which housed a large assortment of model antique steam engines, offices, guest houses, printing shop, chapel, and bell tower.



Downingtown Vintage Ad

Edwin Peterson's Atlantic Service Station was at 132 West Lancaster Avenue in Downingtown where Turkey Hill is now located. This gas station, which was built in 1940, was one of a number of gas stations located at the time along Lancaster Avenue. This advertisement is from 1948.



Get your CAR ready
FOR WINTER!

- Atlantic Lubrication
- Crankcase Oil Changed (5 qts.)
- Drain and refill transmission (3 pts.)
- Drain and refill differential (3 pts.)
- Radiator drained, refilled (hose checked)
- Air filter cleaned and re-oiled
- Battery checked, water added, cables inspected, terminals cleaned
- Tires checked
- Windows and car interior cleaned
- Sparkplugs cleaned and inspected

Special at \$4⁹⁵

\$4.00 allowance on your old battery for trade-in on new Exide battery.

Come in and see the new winter and summer tire—Place your order early for Chains and Anti-Freeze

EDWIN PETERSON
ATLANTIC SERVICE STATION
132 W. Lanc. Ave. Downingtown, Phone 577

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.



Advertisements for Non-Profits

West Caln Historical Society

The West Caln Historical Society will hold a meeting on Tuesday, April 16, 2019 at 7 P.M. in the West Caln Municipal Building, 721 West Kings Highway, Wagontown, PA on the subject of: **Gettysburg/Antietam Collection (American Civil War)**. The speaker will be Faye and Ed Max, historians, collectors, re-enactors. Faye and Ed have been collecting American Civil War artifacts for some time, and will share their collection with us in this meeting.

East Brandywine Historical Commission Spring 2019 Speakers Series (all programs presented at East Brandywine Township Building at 3:30 PM)

- **April 28, 2019 – Follow the Brandywine for the Geology, Ecology and Architectural Features of the Border of East Brandywine.** Come and learn about the unique geology, ecology, and history of our area. We'll hear about the East Brandywine Trail that borders the Brandywine Creek (and East Brandywine Township) and how geology matched with man's ingenuity dictated the path. We will also discuss the importance of building, maintaining and expanding suburban green spaces that ensures the health of both humans and animals. Christine Coccozza is a Science teacher at Methacton School District where she teaches Biology and Environmental Science. An avid world traveler, long distance hiker, climber and scuba diver she will present this program that will open your eyes to what's around you that you may never have noticed!
- **May 19, 2019 – The Special Barns of Chester County.** Our speaker specializes in pre-civil war era house and barn architecture of Holland Dutch and Swiss-German areas. He has documented more than 8,000 vernacular buildings that include more than 5,000 homestead barns. Our Chester County barns have long been recognized by barn observers for their forms and styles and their diverse building materials. We'll look at records of barns built 1750 to 1900. Greg Huber is an independent scholar, consultant and principal owner of Past Perspectives and Eastern Barn Consultants and will hold a book signing following his talk. He is the author of 265 articles on barn and house architecture and has led more the 110 house and barn tours.

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. Sickle 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 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.

Community Luncheon

Central Presbyterian Church, 100 W Uwchlan Ave, Downingtown, holds a monthly Community Luncheon from 11 AM until 1 PM on the first Thursday of each month, October through May. Their popular chili, chicken corn noodle, vegetable beef, and cream of potato soups are sold, along with sandwiches, salad platters, homemade desserts and beverages. For take-out service, call 610-269-1576 and ask for the kitchen. Bring a friend, meet a neighbor, or come alone and enjoy good food and fellowship.

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 Mary Coyne for your reservation for dinner at 610-380-8869. 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.

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!



Downingtown Area Historical Society

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610-269-1709

dths1709@gmail.com

<https://www.downingtownhistory.org>

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Follow us on Twitter:



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



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