



# Downingtown Area Historical Society *History Notes*

Interesting bits of Downingtown area history

November 14, 2019

Volume 2, Issue 21

## Downingtown's Josephus Miller Dies From Civil War Wounds (34 Years After the Battle)

On September 5, 1863, Josephus Miller, an African-American man, traveled from his home in West Fallowfield Township where he lived with his wife Alice, to West Chester to enlist in the 8th United States Colored Infantry. Miller was born in Maryland around 1825. Whether he was born into slavery in the South is not known.

At the recruiting office in West Chester, which was one of several in the Philadelphia area for this Regiment, Miller joined Company D. The recruiting officer was a Captain Christmas. Later that month Miller went to Camp William Penn in what is now Cheltenham Township just outside of Philadelphia, where the regiment was being organized and trained. In January 1864, the 8th left Philadelphia for Hilton Head, South Carolina, and in February the unit became part of a Union expedition to Florida sent to disrupt Confederate food supplies coming from that state. Miller, however, was ill and stayed behind in a Hilton Head army hospital.

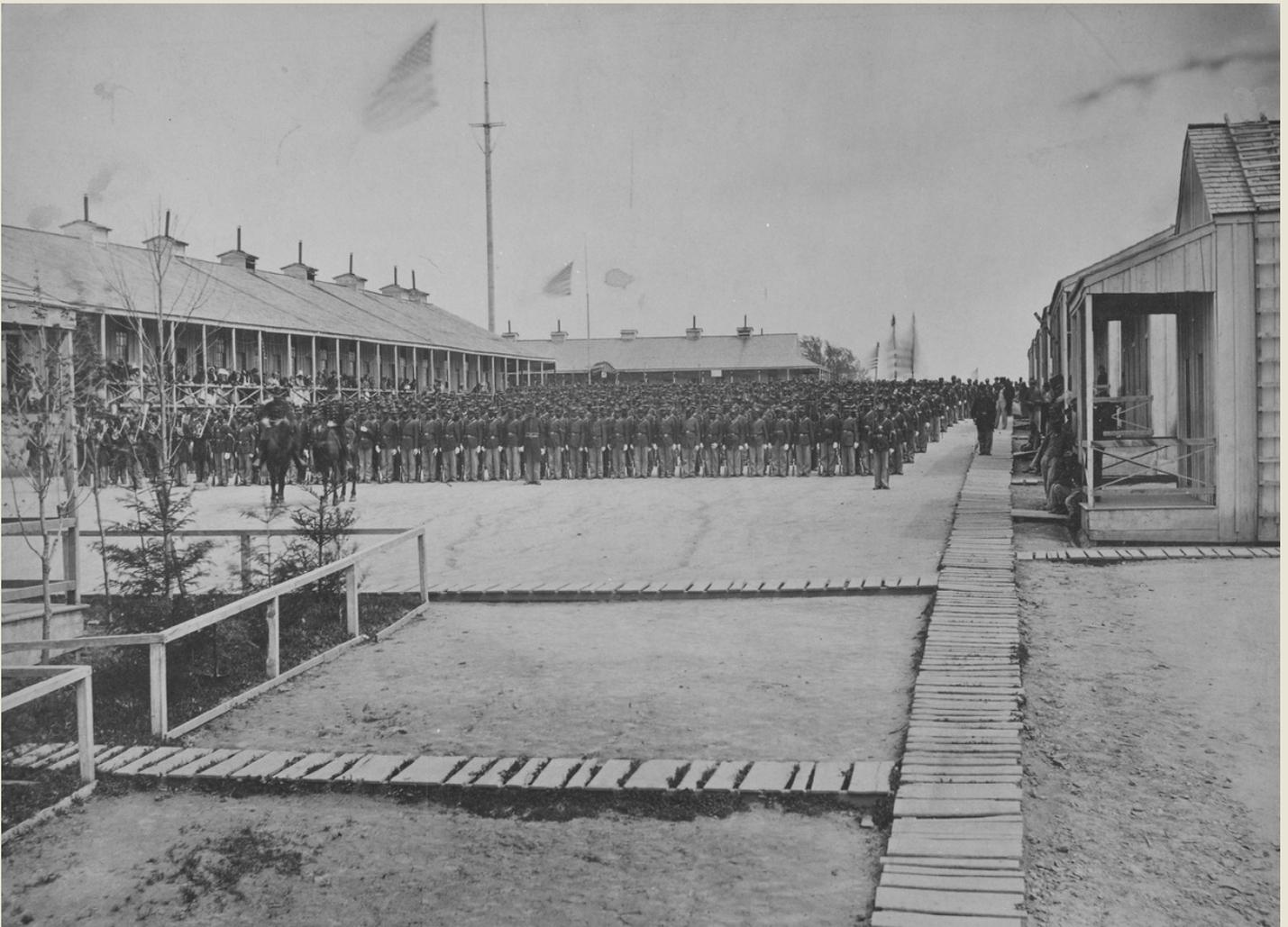
When the 8th arrived in Florida they spent several days in Jacksonville, then marched west into the center of the state. At first, the brigade which included the 8th faced little resistance, and against orders, continued across Florida in order to capture the state capital of Tallahassee. But reinforced Confederate troops met them near the small town of Olustee where the Union troops were repulsed and driven back to Jacksonville. Dozens of men in Miller's regiment were killed or wounded.



(continued on next page)

*Above is a United States Colored Troops recruiting poster*

The 8th remained in Jacksonville until early April and during that time a recuperated Miller rejoined his fellow soldiers. The regiment then moved a short distance east of the city to St. John's Bluff where they remained for most of the hot summer of 1864. In August, the 8th was transferred north to Virginia near Petersburg, and in late September fought in the Battle of Chaffin's Farm (also called Laurel Hill). Here, on September 29, 1864, Josephus Miller was shot three times in the chest. He was taken to a field hospital, but Army surgeons were unable to find the musket balls inside his body. The wounds were closed with the balls remaining inside. Miller was eventually sent to De Camp General Hospital on Davids Island in New York Harbor where, over the following months, he recovered from his chest wounds. Partially disabled soldiers, such as those in Miller's condition, were often sent to the Veteran Reserve Corps for the remainder of their enlistments where they would perform garrison or other light duty, freeing able-bodied soldiers to serve on the front lines. But on Miller's discharge certificate it was noted that "being a negro he is not a subject for the Veteran Reserve Corps." As a result, Josephus Miller was discharged from the Union Army on January 3, 1865 and returned to Chester County. He carried home inside of him the three confederate musket balls.



*Above is a regiment at Camp William Penn in 1865.*

Miller returned home to his wife Alice in East Fallowfield where he worked as a farm hand. Sometime in the 1870s the couple moved to Downingtown. In the 1880 Census the Miller's were living on Church Street. Josephus' occupation was a 'fence maker.' He and Alice lived in or near Downingtown for the rest of his life. Miller was very active in the Grand Army of the Republic George F. Smith Post. This post in West Chester was comprised of former African-American soldiers.

The Confederate musket balls caused Miller considerable pain and trouble throughout his life. But in October 1898 the pain worsened, and he became very sick. He died at home on November 2, 1898. He was buried in Chestnut Grove Cemetery in West Chester.

# Luminaria Supplies

The holidays are fast approaching, and the Historical Society will again make it possible for people to be part of this Downingtown tradition by selling luminaria candles and bases. Orders can be made via our website at <https://www.downingtownhistory.org/shop>, or you can email us the quantities you need to [dths1709@gmail.com](mailto:dths1709@gmail.com) and bring a check or cash when you pick them up. Prices are:

- \$2.00 for a set which includes plastic base, candle, and bag
- \$1.00 for the plastic base only
- \$1.00 for the candle/bag only

Pickup of orders will be available at the Ashbridge House, our headquarters next to the Chick-Fil-A Restaurant on Route 30 in East Caln, on Sundays, December 8<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, or 22<sup>nd</sup>. Email us if you have any questions or need different pickup times. It would be helpful to have orders by December 3, but we will try to accommodate later orders.



# Downingtown Area From Above

This photograph was taken facing north and shows the Exton drive-in theater in 1978.



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

**1879** – Frank Clayton of Marshallton in West Bradford Township was one of the areas best hunters who kept a large number of fox hounds. During a February hunt, Clayton and his dogs chased a fox for four hours before he gave up. The hounds, however, didn't heed the call to stop and continued the pursuit. Of his 18 dogs, only five returned. It was not known if the missing 13 ever came back.

**1911** – In July, two Downingtown boys were arrested after breaking into and stealing goods from a Pennsylvania Railroad boxcar. However, railroad officials agreed to drop the charges if the boys' parents paid for the stolen items.

**1931** – According to a newspaper article "a wild mallard duck with a steel trap attached to its leg has been seen flying over Beaver Creek, near Downingtown, PA. The bird, apparently, is not handicapped in flying."

**1942** – On May 5, a truck carrying 6,000 gallons of gasoline overturned on Lancaster Avenue in the center of Downingtown, spilling its contents over a two-block area. The accident occurred at 5:45 AM when the driver, Charles Taggart of Philadelphia, slammed on his brakes causing the truck to overturn. The gasoline caught fire and destroyed telephone polls and damaged the roadway. The gasoline also drained into sewers resulting in several small explosions. Taggart, who was driving the truck to Philadelphia from Lebanon, escaped injury. No homes or businesses were damaged.

# Downingtown Then & Now

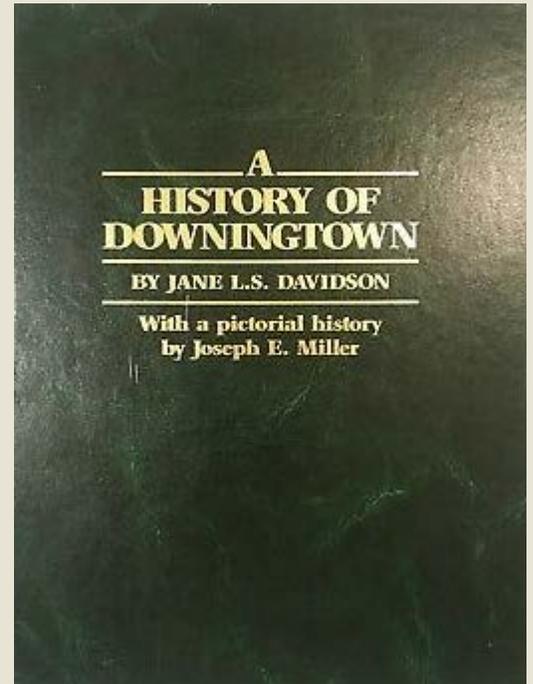
A recent Downingtown Then & Now, which we posted on Facebook and YouTube, compares an image taken of East Brandywine Township's Guthriesville School in early 1941, and one taken not too long ago from the same spot. The "Then & Now" series can be seen on YouTube by clicking here: [Then & Now](#)



# Downingtown Historical Commission Holiday Specials

Our friends at the Downingtown Historic Commission have several items for sale for the upcoming holidays...

The sale begins Monday November 25<sup>th</sup> and ends January 2<sup>nd</sup>. All items can be purchased at the Log House Santa event on December 7<sup>th</sup> from 10 AM to 2 PM. Or you can send an email to [dtownhistoric@gmail.com](mailto:dtownhistoric@gmail.com) to make arrangements for purchase at Borough Hall.



*A History of Downingtown*  
by Jane L.S. Davidson - \$25  
(regular price \$35)



Log House Mugs - \$8

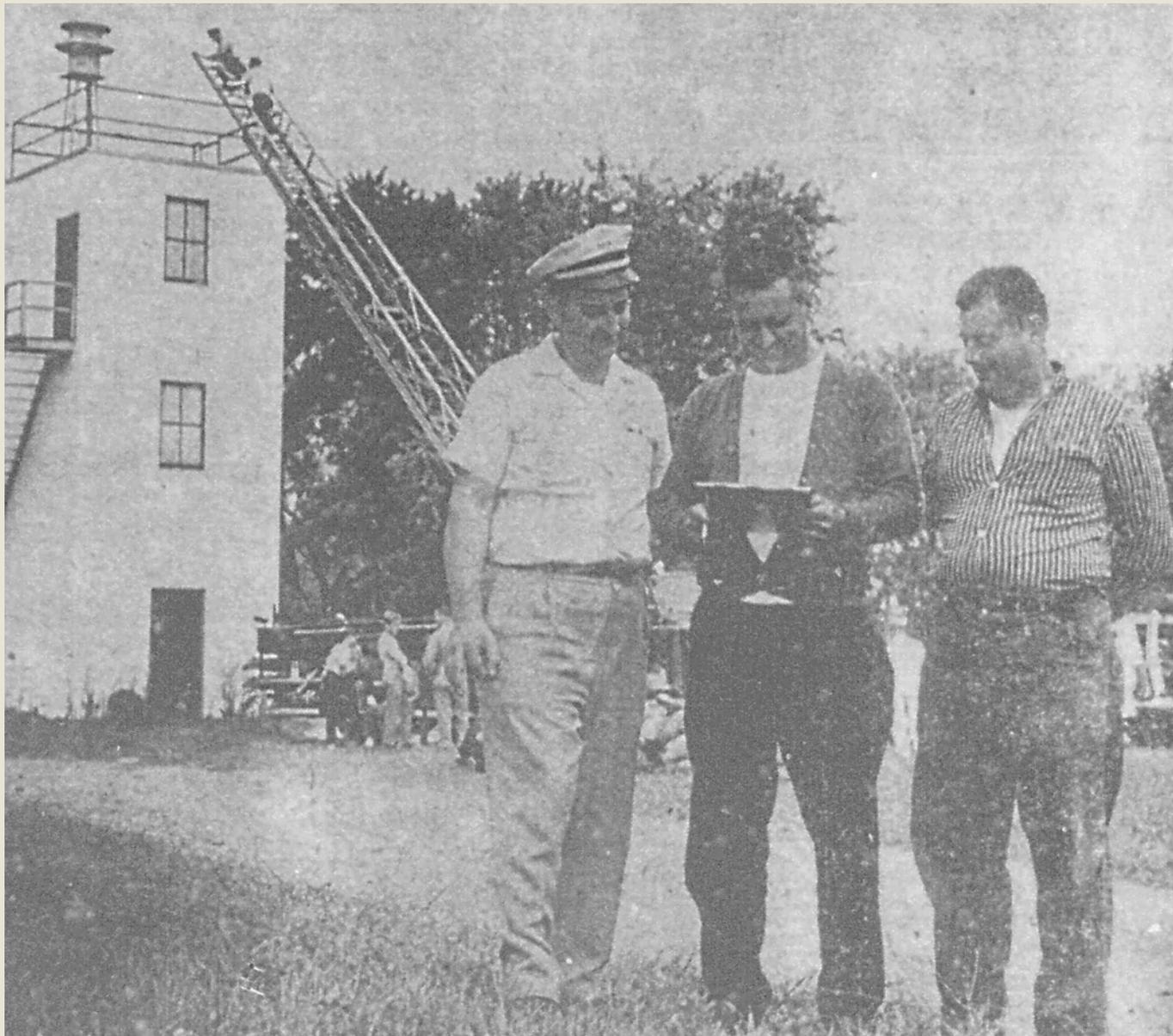
Proceeds from sales of the mug and book support the general up-keep of the Log House. T-shirt sales support the placement of the Civil War "Minquas Cannon" at the Veterans Memorial in Kerr Park. Restoration of the cannon, which for many years stood outside the Minquas Fire Station, was the first phase. Building the cannon's pedestal at the Memorial is the second phase. The third and final phase will be an event to place the cannon and plaques of Civil War Soldiers, including our Marine Medal of Honor recipient Pinkerton Vaughn, at the Veterans Memorial.



Log House T-shirts - \$15  
(regular price \$20)

## Last Issue's Mystery Pic

**Bob Good** is a truly perceptive scholar because he was the first person to correctly identify the location in the image below as the **Chester County Fire School** which was located on the grounds of the Thorndale Fire Company in Caln Township. The image was taken in 1962 and shows (L to R): Alfred Peterman, Assistant Chief of Alert Fire Company; William Winters, County Fire Marshall and the school's Operating Supervisor; and James Leslie, Hosting Chief from the Thorndale Fire Company. The newer station building for the fire company is located on the site now.



## Downingtown Area Group Photo

Below is the 9<sup>th</sup> grade class of Guthriesville High School taken in 1941. Bottom row (L to R): Miriam Popjoy and Mazie Lammey; middle row: Sarah Herrington, Olga Robinson, Dorothy Kinzinger, and Hazel James; top row: Donald Laird, Joseph Seeds, and Frank Styer.



## Downingtown Vintage Ad

Kwik-Kook Take-Out Shop was owned and operated by Bob and Carol Chisholm and was located at 815 West Lancaster Avenue. This ad was from 1963.

Downingtown

# KWIK - KOOK

-815 W. Lincoln Highway-  
CHICKEN - SEAFOOD

<b>HOAGIES:</b>	<b>STEAKS:</b>
Italian	mushroom
Cheese	onion
Ham	sweet pepper
Turkey	Rib eye

## PIZZA

Capital Bakery Products — Imported and Domestic  
Cheeses—Spring Glen Products—Eggs, Batter, Milk,  
Cold Sodas.

• Self-Service Dining Room.

**SAVE TIME-PLACE YOUR ORDER  
BY DIALING 296-3675**

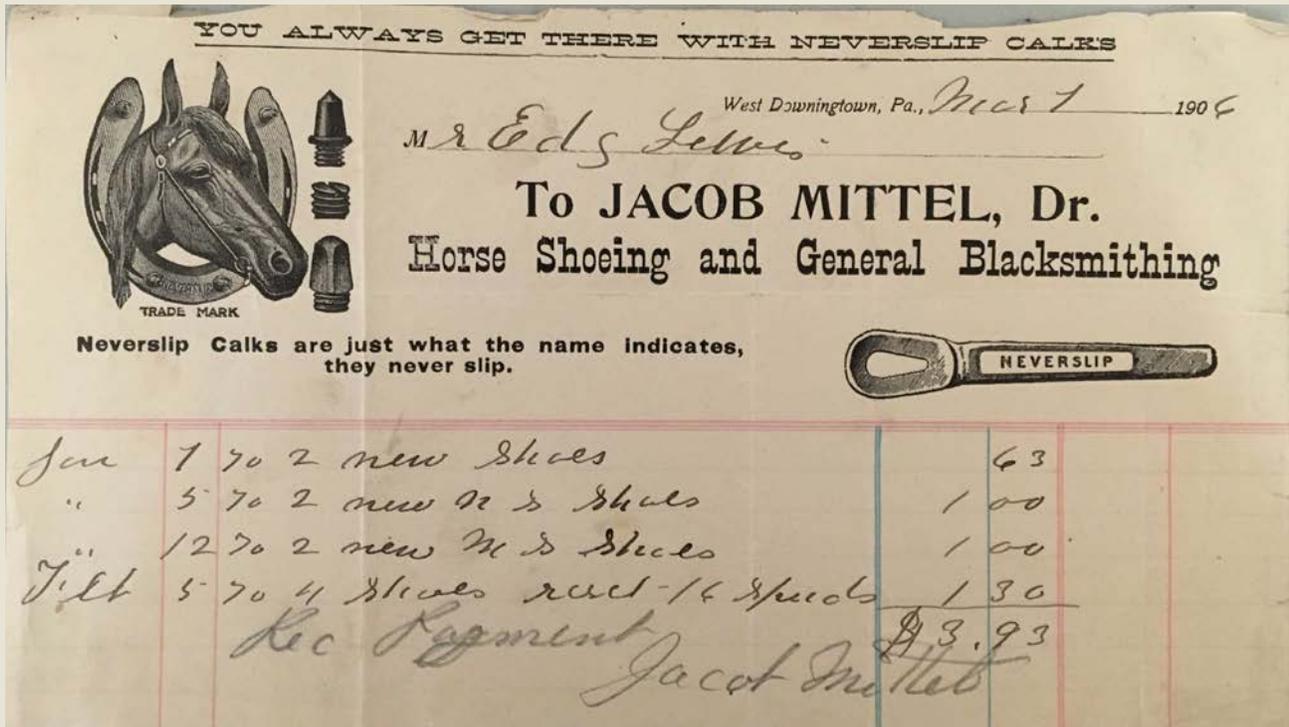
**OPEN:** Mon. - Tues. - Wed. — 11 a. m. to 9 p. m.  
Thurs. - Fri. - Sat. - Sun.—11 to 11

Owned and Operated by  
**BOB & CAROL CHISHOLM**

# Ashbridge Artifact

Here is a receipt for ten horseshoes purchased by Edge Lewis from Jacob Mittel in January and February 1906. Mittel operated a horse shoeing and blacksmith shop on the west side of Downtingtown. Lewis paid the \$3.93 bill on March 7 of that year.

We have seen "Dr." behind the name of some business owners but we do not know what it stands for. If you have any idea, please let us know.



## Downtingtown Area Mystery Pic

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



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# Advertisements for Non-Profits

## ***Glen Moore Methodist Cookie Sale and Craft Bazaar***

December 7, 2019, 10-2. Glen Moore Methodist, Creek Rd, Glenmoore. Cookies sold by the pound, light lunch available AND crafts and gifts to astound. Join us in beautiful Downtown Glenmoore.

## ***West Caln Historical Society***

The West Caln Historical Society will hold a meeting on Tuesday, November 19, 2019 at 7 P.M. in the West Caln Municipal Building, 721 West Kings Highway, Wagontown, PA on the subject of: **History of Chester County Coroner.** The speaker will be Dr. Christina J. VandePol, MD, County Coroner.

***Fall 2019 East Brandywine Historical Commission Speakers Series.*** All programs are held at 3:30 p.m. at the East Brandywine Township Building

**Sunday, November 17<sup>th</sup>** - "History of the American Flag." The speaker is Michael Rapp. Michael and his wife Jeanne owned Brandywine Flags from 1995"

## ***Central Presbyterian Church Community Luncheon***

Central Presbyterian Church, 100 W Uwchlan Ave, Downingtown, PA 19335, holds a monthly Community Luncheon on the first Thursday of each month, October through May from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Their ever-popular chili, chicken corn noodle, vegetable beef, and cream of potato soups are sold along with sandwiches, salad platters, homemade desserts and beverages. Gluten free options are available. 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.

## ***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, October 16, 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

P.O. Box 9, Downingtown, PA 19335

610-269-1709

[dths1709@gmail.com](mailto:dths1709@gmail.com)

<https://www.downingtownhistory.org>

Like us on Facebook:



Follow us on Twitter:



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



### DAHS Board of Directors

**President:** Phil Dague

**Vice President:** Jim Sundman

**Recording Secretary:** Marion Piccolomini

**Corresponding Secretary:**

**Treasurer:** Lauren Fagan

**Directors:** Mike Dunn, Robin Ashby, Jordan Staub,  
Karen Steinbach

**Presidents Emeritus:** Roger Grigson, Parry Desmond