JOHN DREW'S JITNEY SERVICE AND THE DARBY HILLDALES

Left: John Drew and his two sons pose by his bus in 1930.
Below: John Drew's bus.

From "The Red Arrow" by Ronald DeGraw; John
Drew photograph courtesy of Melvyn McCalla

Take me out to the ball game ... by trolley

John Mott Drew was born in 1883 in Darby, Pennsylvania and was one of Darby's most prominent and successful African-American businessmen, operating a successful ice house. He saw that many women in Darby were employed as domestics at homes in Lansdowne and the surrounding area, and that it was difficult for the women to reach their places of employment because the trolley line operated only to Wycombe and Fairview Avenues.

He and Louis Lind raised \$2,465 as a down payment on two buses and formed the John M. Drew Bus Line to operate a jitney service from Darby to Lansdowne and the 69th Street Terminal. The Pennsylvania Public Service Commission issued the license on November 19, 1918. This may have been the first license issued by the PSC.

Service commenced on February 17, 1919, using two five-passenger Ford Touring Cars.

In 1930 the Drew Bus Line was purchased by the Aronimink Transportation Company, the bus subsidiary of what later became the Philadelphia Suburban Transportation Company, also known as the Red Arrow Lines. In 1970 the bus and trolley routes were purchased by SEPTA. The sale of the Drew Bus Line to Aronimink Transportation was contingent upon the new owners offering employment to Drew's employees who wanted to work for Red Arrow. This was an important issue during the Depression. Among the people employed by the Drew Bus Line was Mr. Frederick Trent, a prominent and civic-minded Darby citizen who lived to the age of 100.

In 1929 Drew purchased the Negro Baseball League World Champion Darby Hilldales. The team was formed in 1910 by Ed Bolden, another important Darby resident who worked for the U.S. Postal Service and whose love of baseball led him to create a team noted for clean play and fair dealing. The Hilldales won several eastern division pennants and the Negro League World Series against the Kansas City Monarchs in 1925.

John Drew was 94 when he died in 1977.

This map shows Hilldale Park in Yeadon and the nearby trolley lines which brought fans to the ball game. Note that Bunting Avenue has become MacDade Boulevard.

Skiles Montague Collection, Darby Free Library

FRAND STAND SEATS

Ed Bolden with 1925 Negro League World Champion Darby Hilldales.

Collection of Melvyn McCalla

Darby resident and postal employee Ed Bolden, who formed the Darby Hilldales in 1910.

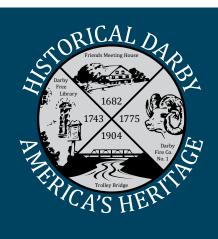
Collection of John Bossong



Collection of John Bossong



Darby Hilldale tickets.



DARBY AND THE DESEGREGATION OF PHILADELPHIA STREETCARS

The Philadelphia and Darby Railway Company was formed on April 28, 1857 and was the second street railway chartered in Philadelphia. Streetcars drawn by horses first came to the Blue Bell, near Darby, on December 24, 1858 on what is today's SEPTA Route 11. Service was extended to Darby in January 1859.

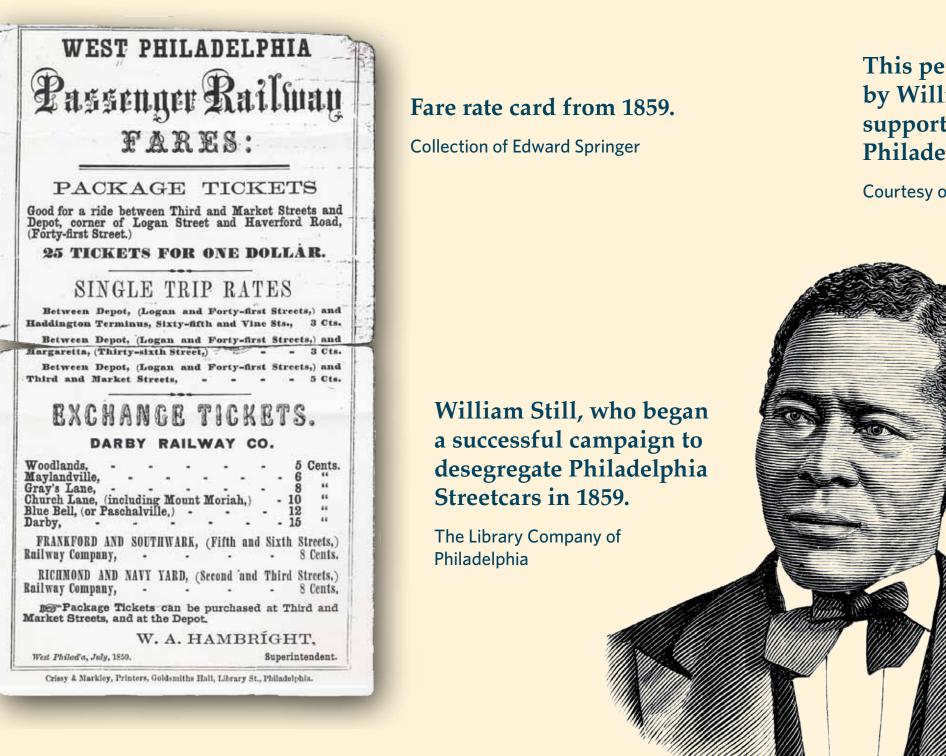
At this time people of color were not allowed to ride the cars, "except they chose to stand on the front platform with the driver." 1 William Still was a successful African-American coal merchant, an eloquent leader and recorder of the Philadelphia Underground Railroad movement. In 1859 he began his campaign for the rights of colored people to ride inside the cars. An article in the North American and United States Gazette asked why in the "City of Brotherly Love, should those who are taxed to support highways be rejected from those very highways."

In 1861, Still circulated a petition in favor of the right to ride in the cars. He estimated the number of visits made to bankers, editors, judges, merchants, ministers, lawyers and other civic leaders to be "not less than 1000" ¹ and by 1862 had gathered the signatures of some 360 prominent Philadelphians. In a letter to the National Anti-Slavery Standard in 1867, Alfred H. Love wrote, "some people refused to ride for nearly a year... Some made the sacrifice to ride on front platforms with them [the colored people], and even in storms; our dear friend Lucretia Mott, now so ill, has taken her stand beside them in that exposed position." ²

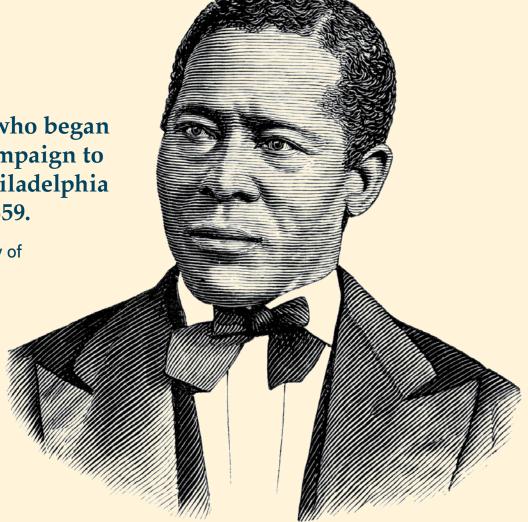
One of the more eloquent appeals occurred in the winter of 1864 as thousands of wounded colored soldiers were brought to army hospitals in Paschalville (Darby Road) and West Philadelphia (Clark Park). "The fifteen hundred wounded soldiers who lay in pain at the Summit and Satterlee hospitals a few weeks since received but few visits from their colored brethren, simply because the rules enforced on these cars would not allow decent colored people to ride, and eight or nine dollars per day (the usual charge for carriage hire) was beyond the means of the masses to pay ... although the presence of such mother, wife, or sister might save a life." 1

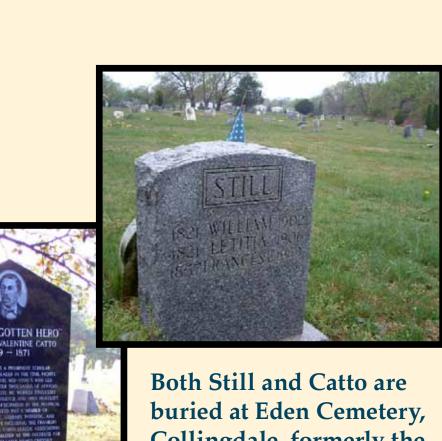
Still reported before a large public meeting in 1867 that "one line, the West Philadelphia and Darby Road (today's Route 11), informed me through its president, Mr. Ellis, that its board had acted on our petition and had unanimously agreed to admit all colored people without distinction." 1

In 1866, Civil Rights leader Octavius Catto and the Pennsylvania Equal Rights League successfully lobbied the Pennsylvania legislature to desegregate all Pennsylvania streetcars, and in 1867 the Pennsylvania Legislature passed an Act prohibiting discrimination on all the lines. William Still's struggle for human dignity continued. In 1872 he published the classic *The Underground Railroad*. William Still died in 1902 and is buried at Eden Cemetery, on Springfield Road near Darby, close to the grave of Octavius Catto.

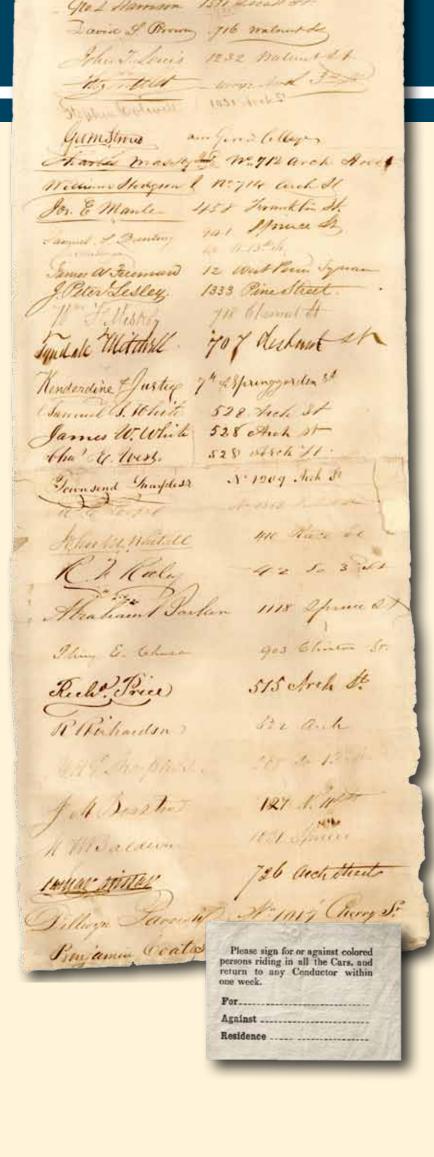


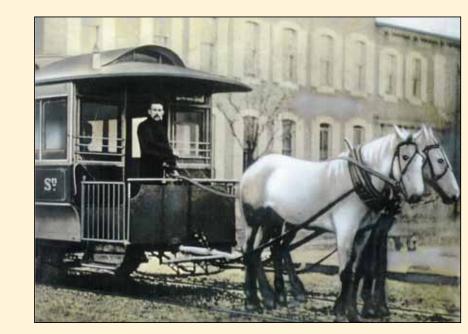
This petition was circulated by William Still to enlist supporters of desegregating Philadelphia's streetcars. Courtesy of Joel Spivak





Collingdale, formerly the Bartram Farm. It is now the nation's oldest African-American cemetery.





A typical horse-drawn streetcar. Collection of Joel Spivak, courtesy of Dennis Szabo



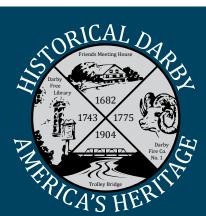
Civil Rights and

streetcar activist

Octavius Catto.

The Library Company

of Philadelphia



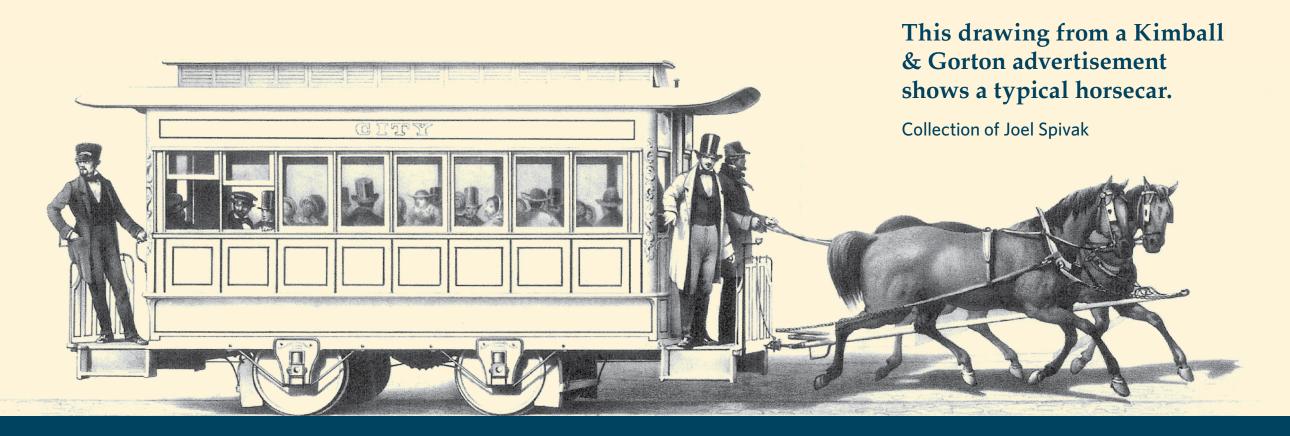
DARBY: TRANSPORTATION HUB

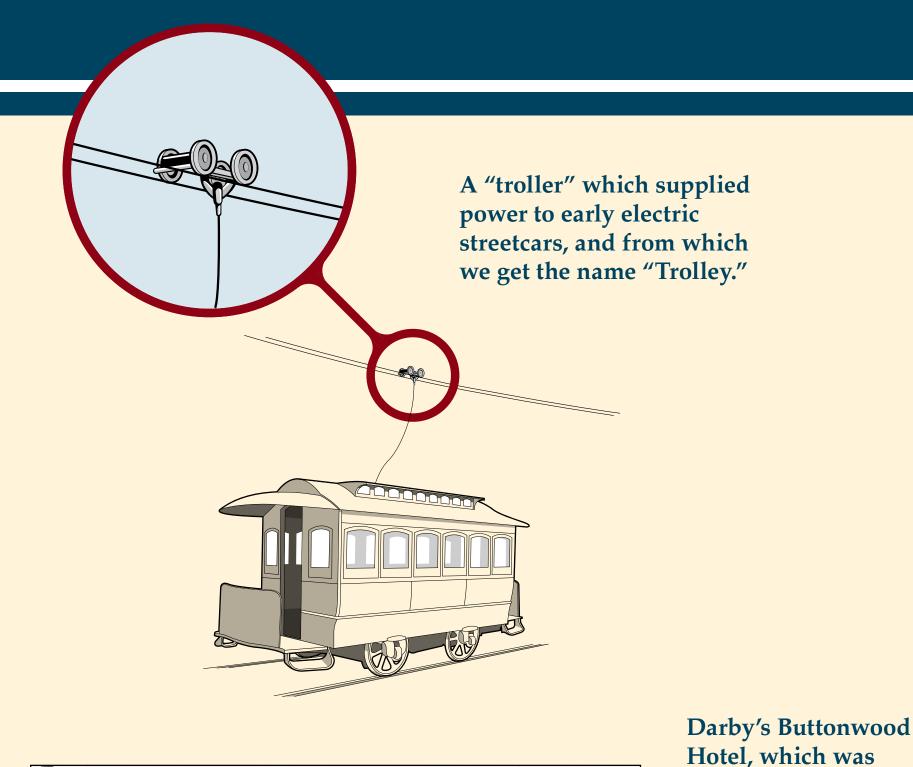
Darby has always been strategically located. The ancient Minquas Indian Trail (Pennsylvania's first highway) passed close by, connecting the Susquehannock region with the Swedish and Dutch fur trading posts along the Schuylkill and Delaware Rivers. After Penn's arrival, Darby was the hub for roads linking Darby Meeting with Quaker Meetings in Springfield, Chester, Philadelphia and Radnor. Darby was also on the main stagecoach route between Philadelphia and the southern colonies. Darby witnessed Washington's advance and retreat from the Battle of Brandywine, Rochambeau's March to Yorktown, Washington's triumphal procession to his first Inauguration as President, and much more.

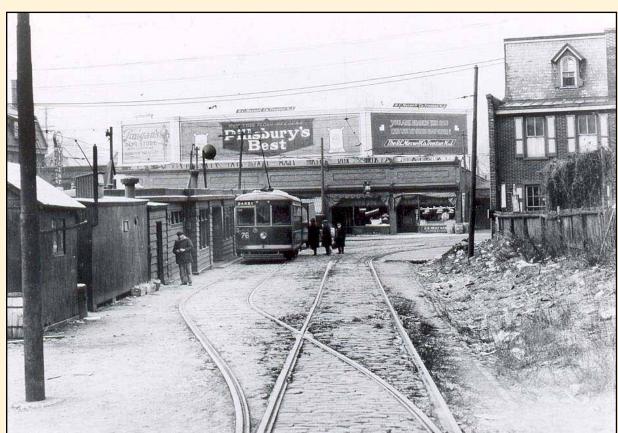
In 1833, according to Ashmead's History of Delaware County, L. Kittenger ran a line of stages twice daily between Darby and Philadelphia. In December of the same year, J. Tomlinson purchased the line from Kittenger and operated a large omnibus, the "William Penn," which was drawn by four black horses. In 1837, the line was sold to John Smith who continued the twice daily service.

The Philadelphia and Darby Railway Company was formed on April 28, 1857 and was the second street railway chartered in Philadelphia and the first to connect with Delaware County. Streetcars drawn by horses first came to the Blue Bell near Darby on December 24, 1858. The Darby route was electrified May 29, 1894 and operated by the Philadelphia Traction Company, later the Union Traction Company, the Philadelphia Rapid Transit Company and currently by SEPTA. Trolleys went from Darby to Media via Folsom, Wilmington via Chester, and between Darby and Lansdowne on the Rt. 78 and on a half mile loop (Rt. 62) known as the "Darby Dinky." Today's Rt. 13 began service in 1907.

The name "trolley" refers to the early way of getting electric power to the motor by way of a little cart that would "troll" along behind the car on a double wire, and supply power. These "Trollers" were not particularly successful because they often fell off, and were eventually replaced with a long pole connecting with the overhead wire, but the "Troller" name stuck, and today we have "Trolleys."

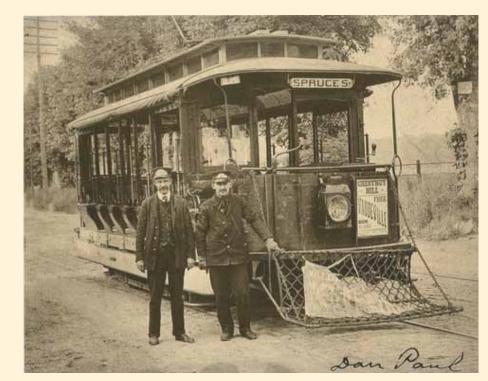






1921 Photo of Darby **Transportation Center.** Photo from collection of Henry J. Adamcik,

courtesy of Electric City Trolley Museum



Left: Early electric trolley shown with conductor John Guest. **Right: Darby Horsecar showing** John Guest on rear platform. John was a Civil War veteran and partner in the Darby carriage-building business of Guest and Clarke in Darby.

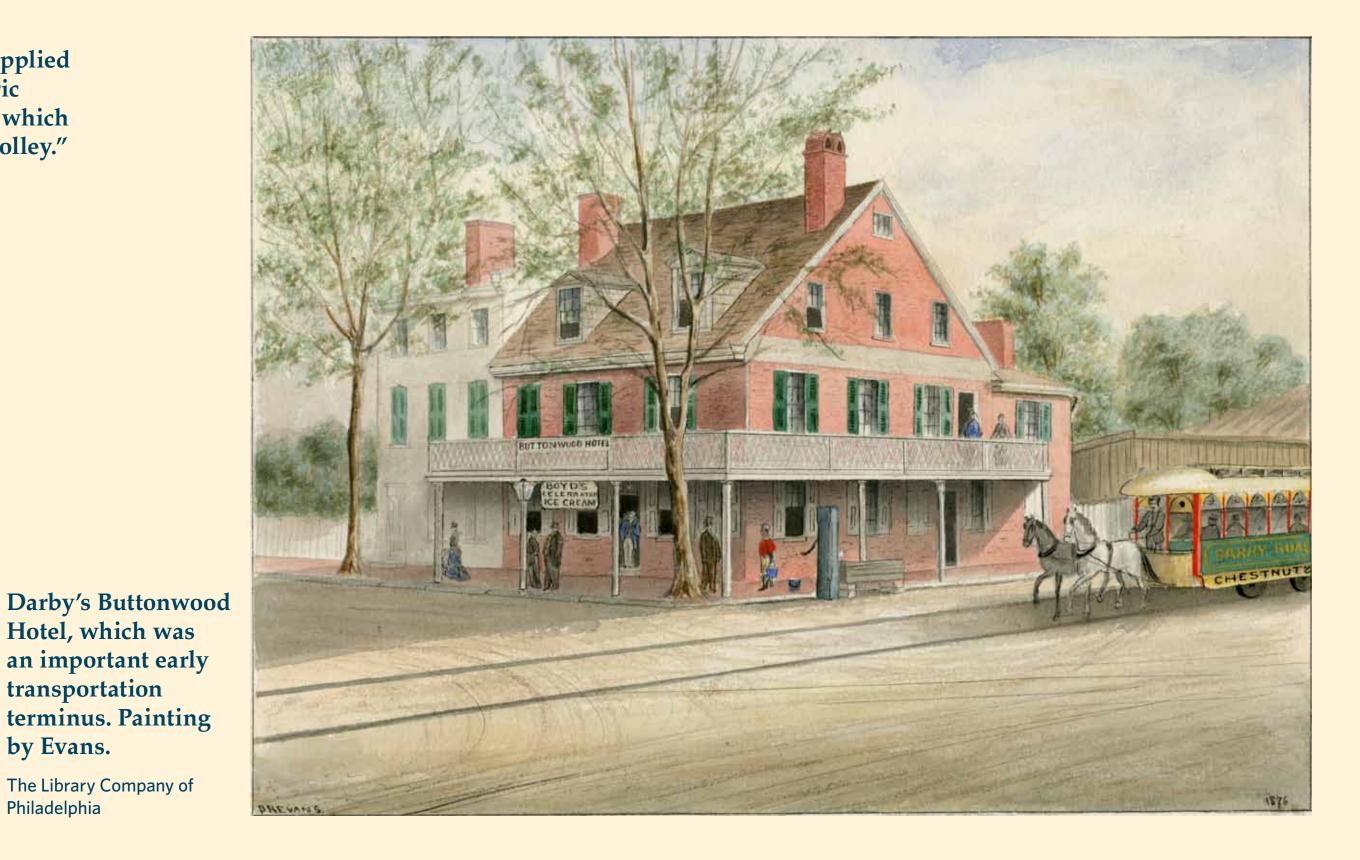
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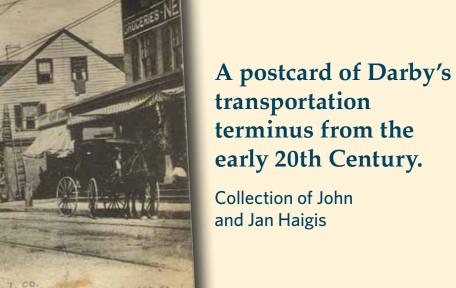
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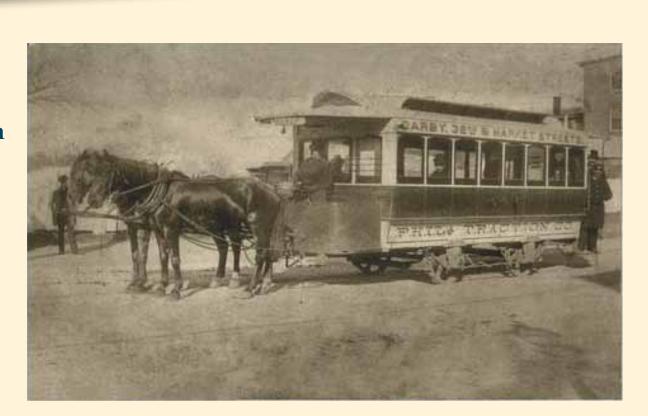
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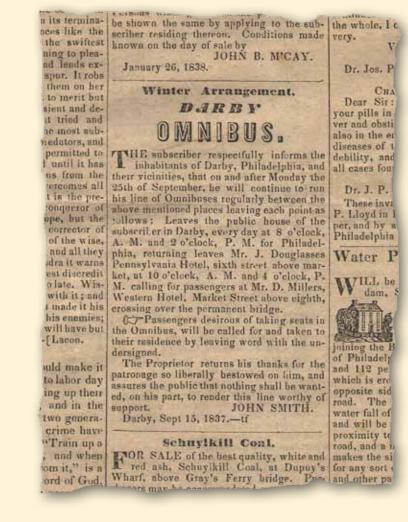
Philadelphia

Collection of John Guest's great-greatgranddaughter, Judith Devon





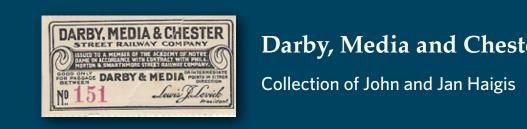




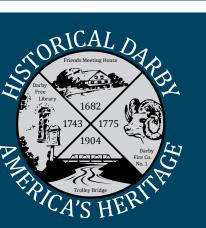
1837 Advertisement for twice-daily Omnibus between Darby and Philadelphia.

From the Delaware County Republican and Farmer's, Mechanic's and Manufacturer's Advocate; courtesy of Thomas Smith





These signs are a collaborative effort on the part of SEPTA, Darby Borough, the Delaware County Planning Department and the Darby Borough Historical Commission. Historical gracious assistance of many friends. Signs designed by Gregory Prichard.



EARLY DARBY

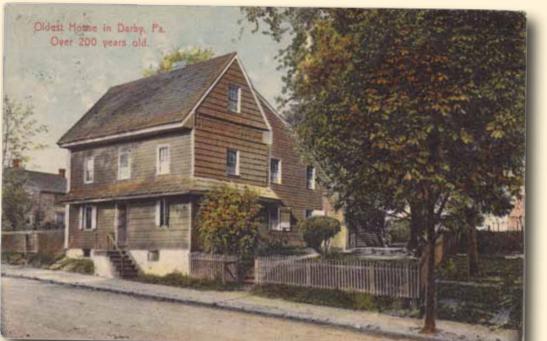
The earliest inhabitants of Darby were the Lenni Lenape. The Dutch and Swedes arrived in the 1630's to participate in the fur trade. Swedish Governor, Johann Printz, arrived in 1642 and built a grist mill in Cobbs Creek near the Blue Bell around 1645. This was the first European mill in what would later become Pennsylvania. In 1682, John Blunston and other settlers came with William Penn and named the area after their home in Derbyshire. Blunston donated land for a burial ground and meetinghouse, and the Quakers established a school. With abundant water for transportation, farming, and mills on both Darby and Cobbs Creeks, the village prospered.

Darby was the hub for roads connecting Darby Meeting with Quaker Meetings in Chester, Providence, Philadelphia, Radnor and Springfield. Darby was also on the main stagecoach route between Philadelphia and the southern colonies.

Sometime before 1695, a "millcat race or trench" was "digged thru Blunston's land and meadow" from Darby Creek to the Fulling Mill built by William and Joseph Wood near today's 8th and Main Streets. This may have been the first mill race in Pennsylvania and traces of it are still visible.

In May of 1743, the Darby Library Company was organized and, with the help of John Bartram, books were ordered from England. Darby Free Library is now the oldest public library in continuous use in the United States.

On January 27, 1775, Darby Fire Company No. 1 was organized and is one of the oldest volunteer fire companies in the United States.



These signs are a collaborative effort on the part of SEPTA, Darby Borough, the Delaware

County Planning Department and the Darby Borough Historical Commission. Historical

gracious assistance of many friends. Signs designed by Gregory Prichard.

This home on Main Street next to the Library is believed to have been the home of John Blunston. It was destroyed by fire in the

Collection of John

and Jan Haigis

first water-powered mill, circa 1645. In the background is the Blue Bell Inn on Cobbs Creek, scene of a November, 1777 battle. Photo by John Haigis

This sign marks the site of Pennsylvania's

1777 Faden Map showing Darby.

The Library Company of Philadelphia

Events in Pennsylvania

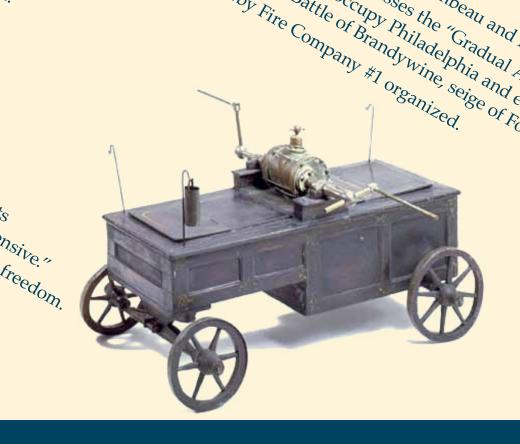
and Darby History

Events in American History



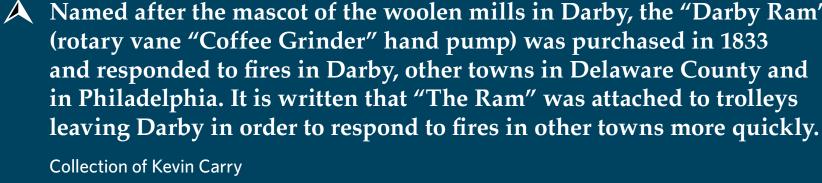
A postcard of Main Street, showing the Buttonwood Hotel on the left.

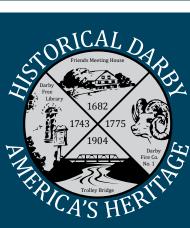
Collection of John



A Named after the mascot of the woolen mills in Darby, the "Darby Ram" (rotary vane "Coffee Grinder" hand pump) was purchased in 1833







DARBY AND THE Underground Railroad



Quaker Thomas Garrett of Wilmington Delaware worked with William Still and his brother, Edward Garrett, of Upper Darby, to help some 2,700 people escape to freedom. Arrested because of his activities and bankrupted by the Court, he nevertheless said "Thou has left me without a dollar...I say to thee and to all in this court room, that if anyone knows a fugitive that wants shelter, send him to Thomas Garrett and he will befriend him..."

Courtesy of Garrett descendant Robert Seeley

William Still, author of the classic book "The Underground Railroad," worked with Thomas Garrett and others helping escaping slaves as part of the Philadelphia Vigilant Committee and is buried at Eden Cemetery.

The Library Company of Philadelphia



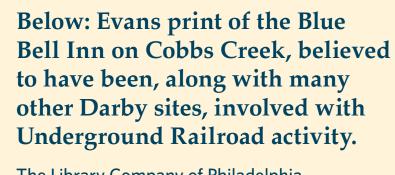
Charles Lloyd was the proprietor of the Blue Bell Inn on Cobbs Creek in the 19th century and a former mayor of Darby. Among other actions, Lloyd is said to have aided an escaped slave who arrived in Darby, nursed him back to health and paid for his passage out of the country.

rom the collection of Lloyd descendant Coleman Headley

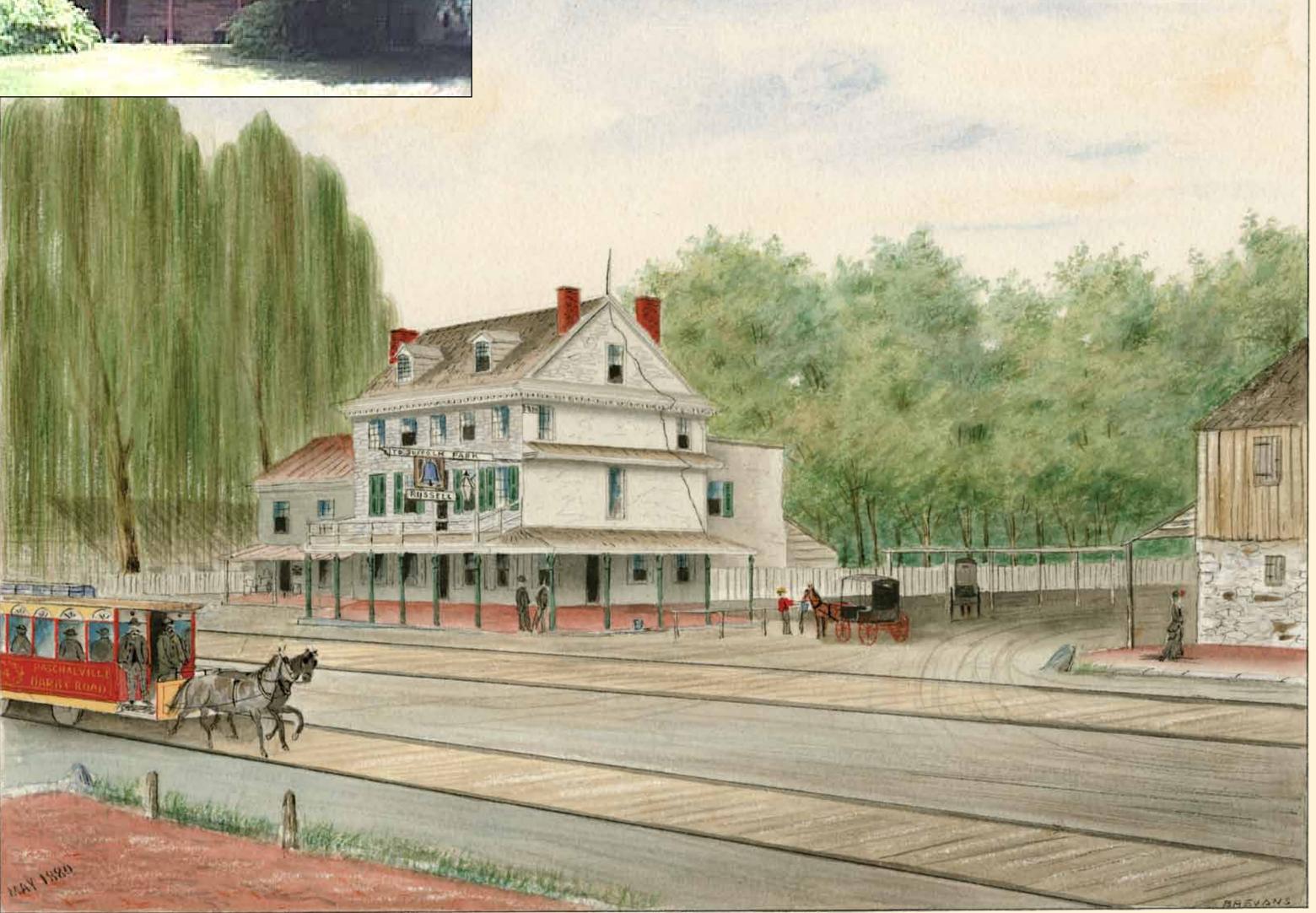


Left: Darby Friends Meetinghouse. This was the third meetinghouse in Darby, built in 1805. Families such as Garrett, Lloyd, Bonsall, Sellers, Bunting and many others involved in the Underground Railroad were members of this meeting.

Photo by John Haigis



The Library Company of Philadelphia



The term "Underground Railroad" refers to the decentralized and clandestine network of people, both white and black, who helped escaping slaves to freedom. As early as 1786, George Washington complained about runaway slaves being aided by a "society of Quakers, formed for such purposes." The term "underground" refers to the fact that helping escaping slaves was illegal under both the 1793 and 1850 Fugitive Slave laws. Because it was located on the main road from the south, was close to the border with Maryland and had a large population of supportive Quakers, free people of color, and other supporters, Darby was a center of Underground Railroad activity.

Anti-slavery sentiment in Darby goes back to at least 1715 when John Blunston, Caleb Pusey, Nicholas Fairlamb and John Wright laid a concern before the Quarterly Meeting. They questioned and opposed Quaker involvement in the practice of "importing, buying or selling of negroe slaves."

Darby's and the surrounding area's involvement may also include the escape of Washington's cook, Hercules, who was said to have disappeared somewhere between Philadelphia and Chester on the final trip back to Mt. Vernon in 1797. He was never recaptured and it is possible he had local help. John Jackson of Darby (now Sharon Hill) is also known to have aided fugitives and many Darby families and names worked for the end of slavery.







1904 Warren Pony-Truss Trolley Bridge

This Warren Pony-Truss bridge spanning Darby Creek was used to bring trolleys from the semi-rural Delaware County lines into the heart of Darby's retail district. It's believed to be the last of its type in the United States built for trolleys.

The bridge's superstructure consists of a riveted Warren pony-truss where the roadway passes through the truss line but where there is no overhead bracing. Patented in 1848 by British engineers James Warren and Willoughby Monzani, the straightforward truss was particularly well suited for rigid connections. It is distinguished by its simplicity of design, ease of construction with equal-sized members, and ability of some of the diagonals to reverse stresses.¹

This bridge was constructed in 1904 and served generations of riders on two trolley lines: one to Media via Folsom on Parker Avenue (today's MacDade Boulevard) operated by the Philadelphia, Morton and Swarthmore Street Railway and another to Wilmington, DE and Chester, PA via Chester Pike operated by the Southern Pennsylvania Traction Co.

The bridge later was used by Philadelphia Rapid Transit, and after 1932 by suburban buses of the Philadelphia Transportation Co. and Red Arrow Lines. The bridge and adjoining land was used as their off-street terminal in the same location as today's Darby Transportation Center.²

This postcard shows the Blunston Oak and the newly built trolley bridge, ca. 1905.

Collection of John and Jan Haigis



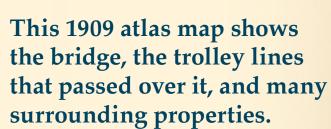




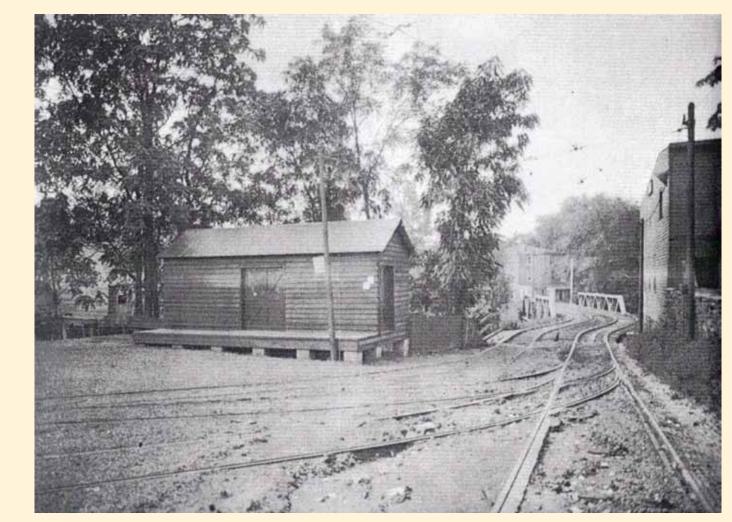
Two views of Darby in 1968 near the Warren pony-truss bridge and Transportation Center. Note the Red Arrow bus which just came across the bridge.

Photos by David King





A.H. Mueller's *Atlas of Delaware County*, 1909; courtesy of the Delaware County Planning Department



The 1904 Warren



Two views of the bridge: one from the early 1900s showing the freight house near the double tracks, and a more recent picture showing the bridge in winter before restoration.

From *Trolleys of Lower Delaware Valley, Pennsylvania* by Harold Cox and Paul J. Schieck; photo above by John Haigis





^{2.} Thanks to D. Harrower and Ed Havens for information

