



**WISSAHICKON
VALLEY
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY**

Newsletter

January 2006

SERVING AMBLER • LOWER GWYNEDD • WHITPAIN COMMUNITIES

Volume 7 • Issue 5

General Membership Meeting

*Monday,
January 9, 2006
7:30 PM*

at the 1895 Schoolhouse

This Month's Program

The Changing Benjamin Franklin

*Celebrating the
300th Anniversary
of his Birth;*

*Presented by
George Boudreau,
PA Humanities Council*

Hospitality

*Regina Croke
and Daughters*

Wissahickon Valley Historical Society

799 Skippack Pike
Blue Bell, PA 19422
215.646.6541

Happy New Year, one and all!

This month, we are celebrating the 300th Anniversary of the birthday of one of this country's amazing men, Benjamin Franklin. He was one of the most extraordinary human beings the world has ever known. Born into the family of a Boston candle maker, Benjamin Franklin became the most famous American of his time. He helped found a new nation and defined the American character. He was a writer, inventor, diplomat, businessman, musician, scientist, humorist, civic leader, international celebrity ... a genius. Come celebrate and explore this fascinating man's life at our January general meeting.

For more information, visit any of the following websites:

<http://www.pbs.org/benfranklin/>

<http://www.benfranklin300.org/>

<http://www.constitutioncenter.org/>

<http://www.ushistory.org/franklin/info/index.htm>



author...



...businessman and diplomat

Members' Holiday Party & Social



Our annual Holiday Party and Social was held Monday, December 12, 2005, at the home of Russ and Jean Bellavance. Members enjoyed beautifully decorated rooms with an abundance of delicious covered dishes, stories, and songs, with a musical string quartet featuring Samm Scarrow on cello, Anna Schneider, Evan Raines, and Adam Xiao on violin.

“A Story From 1753” — by Helen and Bill Missfeldt

Outside the present Borough of Ambler is Upper Dublin Lutheran Church, which is located at the intersection of Butler Pike and Susquehanna Road. This is a brief history of how this church came into being.

Two hundred and fifty-two years ago, Ambler’s population was made up of mostly farmers. In the early 1700s, many Germans came to the Philadelphia area searching for civil and religious freedom. These farmers desired hearing the Word of God as they had in their native lands.

In 1753, Rev. John Frederick Handschud, pastor at St. Michael’s Church in Germantown, came for a visit and helped to organize a congregation. The people in the area wanted a church, a school, and burial grounds, so a site for the church was purchased by Valentine Puff, Jacob Timanus, and George Klippenor.

On June 18, 1754, the Rev. Henry Melchoir Muhlenberg, a missionary sent from Germany, came to the congregation. On that day, he baptized several children and preached to the congregation in a log cabin (which at this time did not have a roof). This log cabin would soon be finished and became the first church building at this location. It was known as Puff’s Church.

The Rev. Muhlenberg was considered to be a circuit preacher and would visit the congregation every few months. He had many congregations that encompassed a wide area. He was able to start many new congregations this way, and serve them frequently throughout the year. During his absence, the church’s laymen would preach services to the congregation.

Interesting notes to related historical events in 1753:

- George Washington was 21 years old
- It would be 25 years later before the suffering and sadness occurred at Valley Forge
- It would be 28 years later before the independence of the United Colonies was gained, and
- It would be more than 100 years before the first railroad passed through this section of the country.

Related links:

<http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Lake/3234/PuffsRecords.html>

WVHS Membership News

▶ **EMMY SIMON’S** sister, **Roseann Grano**, passed away on Sunday, December 25, 2005, after a lengthy illness. She was 78 years old. Services were held at St. Paul’s Church, Norristown, Thursday, December 29. Cards of sympathy may be sent to Emmy at 1471 Manor Lane, Blue Bell, PA 19422.

▶ **MICHELLE SCHWARTZ’S** phone number has changed. Her new number is ~~610-338-0123~~. Please make note of this change in your WVHS Membership Directory booklet.

▶ **If you have any changes** to your address, phone number or e-mail address, please contact Mary Lou McFarland, Membership Services, at 215-542-9381 or via e-mail at cmcpreserve@hotmail.com or e-mail the WVHS Newsletter at wvhs_newsletter@yahoo.com

Stories from the Revolutionary War (as told by a 16 year old girl)

— by Arthur Driedger, Jr.

One of the best original documents from the Revolutionary War period was penned by a 16-year old female member of the Quaker faith, Sally Wister, while staying in Penllyn.

During the British occupation in Philadelphia, 1777, Sally Wister left the city and lived with her aunt, Hannah Foulke, in Penllyn, from September 1777 to June 1778. During this stay, Sally wrote in her journals to her friend, Deborah Norris, who stayed in Philadelphia. Deborah Norris did not read the journals until about 1830, many years after Sally's death in 1804. Sally died a spinster at the age of 43.

While at the home of her aunt, Sally she continued to write in her journals of happenings around the home. This included when General Smallwood and his staff of officers took over parts of the Foulke's large house as his headquarters. As a 16-year old flirtatious girl, Sally wrote of the various officers she met and described them in the journal.

She and her cousins describe how they reacted to the men who came to the house, how they dressed for conquest, and the conversations they had with the various men and their dreams and aspirations.

She took special note to a "major" who was about 19-years old and quite bashful.

The army stayed in the Whitpain area from October 19 to November 2, 1777, before going on to Whitemarsh.

There is additional information about this journal diary. Please refer to the book, Whitpain: Crossroads in Time, Whitpain Bicentennial Commission, 1977, beginning on page 67.

Please Note:

In the 25 years since **Whitpain: Crossroads in Time** was published to celebrate the nation's bicentennial, the book has become a collectors' item within the Township. In honor of Whitpain Township's Tricentennial in 2001, the "Historical Society of Whitpain" has thoroughly updated and revised Crossroads for reissue. The new volume, **Whitpain Township: A Tricentennial Reflection, 1700-2001**, provides a history of the Township from it's founding though the present.

The book was edited by a local historian who grew up in Whitpain Township, Wayne A. Huss, Ph.D., History Professor at Gwynedd-Mercy College. Dr. Huss was charged with marrying **Crossroads** and the new submissions in a manner, which acknowledges the dramatic changes in the Township since 1977, without detracting from the importance of the Township's early history. The result is a popular history, which evokes an appreciation of the Township's deep roots, and encourages renewed interest in the community and further personal study.

Whitpain Township: A Tricentennial Reflection, 1700-2001 is available for \$25. It can be purchased at the Whitpain Township Building. Proceeds will benefit the Historical Society of Whitpain. For more information on how to obtain this book, please call 610-277-2400.

Answers to last month's teaser...

The test was to find how many times the name **Bellavance** was mentioned in the December newsletter?? How did you do?? Did you find all **nine**?? (Hint: on page 1: there were three; on page 2: did you find all five?; on page 3: none; on page 4: there was one.)



Wissahickon Valley Historical Society Calendar of Events ~ January 2006 and upcoming events!

- Mon., Jan. 9 **“The Changing Benjamin Franklin”** **7:30 PM**
*(Celebrating the 300th Anniversary of his Birth;
Presented by George Boudreau, PA Humanities Council)*
- Mon., Jan. 23 **Board Meeting** **7:00 PM**
- Mon., Feb. 13..... **“African-American Women in Pennsylvania
During the Civil War”** **7:30 PM**
*(Celebrating Black History Month)
Presented by Ella Forbes, PA Humanities Council*
- Mon., March 13..... **“The History of Whitpain”** **7:30 PM**
(Presented by Wayne Huss)

VISIT US ON THE WEB AT: <http://www.angelfire.com/pa5/wvhs>
or e-mail us at: wvhs_newsletter@yahoo.com



Wissahickon Valley Historical Society
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**Celebrating the 300th
Anniversary of the Birth
Of Benjamin Franklin**



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