



Wissahickon Valley

historical society

Ambler
Lower Gwynedd
Whitpain

www.wvhs.org

215-646-6541

Volume 16, Issue 6

P.O. Box 96, Ambler, PA 19002

Feb. 2015

Refresh your knowledge of
The U.S. Constitution
- Its Origins and Fundamental Values and Structure

Russ Bellavance will help us take a look at the context of the drafting of the Constitution, the basic values (sometimes competing values), fundamental structure, and content of the document.

Fifty-five delegates from 12 of the 13 states met in Philadelphia in 1787 to write the Constitution - the highest law of the land.

1895 Schoolhouse
799 Skippack Pike/School Road
Blue Bell
Monday, February 9
7:30 p.m.

Program followed by light refreshments/good conversation.

Mark Your Calendar

February 2 - WVHS board meeting, Bellavance home, 7:30 p.m.

February 9 - WVHS monthly meeting, 1895 Schoolhouse, 7:30 p.m. Program: The U.S. Constitution - The Origin and Fundamental Values and Structure of the Constitution

February 12 - movie *Abolitionists* at Philadelphia History Museum, 5:30 p.m. - pre-register with Kelly Murphy at philadelphiahistory.org

March 9 - WVHS monthly meeting, 1895 Schoolhouse, 7:30 p.m. Program: Pictorial History of Whitpain

Wissahickon Valley Historical Society www.wvalleyhs.org info@wvalleyhs.org

Serving Lower Gwynedd, Ambler, and Whitpain

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Local “Mystery” Sites

Last month’s local mystery sites - a bench dedicated to Vietnam veterans and a stone wall and plaque honoring WWII veterans - are located in Wentz Run Park. They can be found along the walking trail in the woods at the back of the park.

An additional note about the stone bridge and arch on Mount Pleasant that was featured in December. **Lois McFadden**, who grew up in Ambler, remembers going with friends to ice skate on the pond above Mount Pleasant Avenue in West Ambler. It was called Tommy’s Dam, and Lois remembers many more freezing days than we have now allowing lots more ice skating.

Can you identify the house at the right? Unfortunately, it was demolished in the 1980s, but it was the home of an important local family who hosted a young author during the Revolutionary War. Her diary is a very readable source of every day life at the time. She also comments about the movements of Washington and his troops before they headed to Valley Forge in winter 1777. Her needlework also is noted by experts.

Call 215-542-7753 or e-mail pegathome6@yahoo.com if you know the house and/or the young lady.



Need to Record Local Buildings

This winter the area has lost several historic buildings. The Ambler Savings and Loan building on Butler Pike is gone - to be replaced with a new building. The building represented a modernist style and was an anchor of Butler Pike. Several good photos were taken of the building in its last days.

The Ambler Gazette reported on the razing of the 88 year old Toner’s Beef and Ale in Fort Washington. It will be replaced by a TD bank. Ambler Gazette’s Linda Finarelli wrote an excellent article about Toner’s after interviewing several people involved in its past.

Several building at Centre Square have quietly been demolished this winter. Many more will go now that Whitpain has approved the shopping center complex for the southern corner of the Skippack Pike/DeKalb intersection. **Bob Whittock** is taking photos of the current buildings - which include the fire house, the original Whitpain library building as well as numerous businesses.

If you hear of or see buildings at risk, please consider taking photos and notes about the buildings so we can add them to our collection. We often have requests for information and photos about area buildings. Another area set for change is the SpringHouse corner between Bethlehem Pike and Sumneytown Pike.

Whitpain to Develop New Comprehensive Plan

Whitpain Township Government is in the second of three year schedule to develop a Comprehensive Plan for the township. With the theme "4 Villages within a Community", a series of meeting is scheduled for this spring. The four communities are Broad Axe, Blue Bell, West Ambler, and Centre Square. All meetings are at 7 p.m.

The open meetings are: **Feb. 4** at Montgomery County Community College - Focus: Comprehensive Planning in 2015 and Life Long Learning Factors.

Feb. 25 at Manor House, Prophecy Creek Park - Focus: Sustainable Communities and Environmental Factors.

March 11 at Arborcrest - Focus: Whitpain's Business Community and Econ. Factors.

March 25 at Centre Square Fire Company - Focus: Whitpain's Recreational Factors.

It's Official - Franklinville on National Registry - by Marie Goldkamp

The National Park Service has officially listed the Franklinville School on the Register of Historic Places as of Dec. 29, 2014. Congratulations to Franklinville and all those who have worked hard for this outcome.

The Franklinville School is the only remaining one-room school in Whitpain Township still open to the public. The school was built in 1858 and closed as a public school in 1916. It was bought by Ralph Beaver Strassburger who owned the surrounding Normandy Farms. His son Peter Strassburger attended the school in the early 1920's as a young child as did the children who lived on Normandy Farms.



In 1925 the 50 Year Club was started by Ralph Beaver Strassburger as a social club for residents who lived in Montgomery County for at least 50 years. The club met annually at the schoolhouse as a special social events for the residents. The club continued through the 1970's. The schoolhouse was also used to show movies to the employees of the

farm. Meetings were also held at the schoolhouse.

The Franklinville School is significant as a school but also as a venue for social activities for the residents of the area.

It was rescued from certain destruction in 1983 when the Historical Society of Whitpain was created. Through the years many repairs have been made to the school while keeping the original integrity of the building.

The Franklinville School stands out as a bright gem surrounded by development - the upscale residential area behind its property, a fine retirement community adjacent to it, and an exclusive golf community across the street.

Lindenwold/St. Mary's Estate Update

Meetings and activities to encourage modification of development plans for this local treasure continue. Please contact MaryLou McFarland at 215-542-9381 to be put on the e-mail list of meetings, updates, etc.

Membership Reminder

If you joined or renewed your membership in the fall, you can skip this section! This is a gentle reminder to anyone who needs to join or renew their WVHS membership for the new year. You can use the following form and mail it to WVHS Membership, c/o 500 Trinity Place, Ambler, PA 19002-5836. Basic membership is \$20 per individual and \$30 per family. Gift memberships can be given for \$10 per person.

Dues help the Society maintain Franklinville School and the 1895 Schoolhouse; provide programs for meeting, for visiting school groups, at other sites; and speak out about the preservation of the history and architecture of Ambler, Lower Gwynedd, and Whitpain.

Name _____

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*If you receive your newsletter by e-mail, it saves about \$1 per newsletter.

Yes, I would like to donate a 1 year gift membership @\$10 per person for:

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