



Wissahickon Valley
historical society

Ambler
Lower Gwynedd
Whitpain

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Vol. 18, Issue 6
Box 96, Ambler, PA 19002

The Wissahickon Valley Historical Society
presents



Every Deed Tells a Story

Presented by Russ Bellavance

Learn about local property deeds
from 18th and 19th centuries.

Wissahickon Public Library - Blue Bell
Skippack Pike and Penllyn Blue-Bell Pike
Monday, February 13 at 7 p.m.
Public is invited.

Please note time change - 7 p.m.

Interesting connection: The January 22 edition of the Ambler Gazette carried an article about "a deed scam". A California-based company has been offering a "grant deed" or "property assessment profile" of the recipient's property for a large fee. The same information that they offer can be obtained from the Montgomery County Office of Recorders of Deeds. This is a good place to start when researching the history of any Montgomery Country property. Their phone is 215-278-3000.

Wissahickon Valley Historical Society - Serving Ambler, Lower Gwynedd, and Whitpain
Volume 18, Issue 6

Whitpain's Work on 1895 Schoolhouse Almost Completed

2016 was a very busy year at the 1895 Schoolhouse. Whitpain Township made a much appreciated decision to undertake a number of improvements on the building.

Ron Cione, Whitpain Township Director of Public Works, recently shared a list of specifics.

1. Upgrade to electrical service to the building. The branch wiring upgrade will be completed in the next couple of months. These projects make the building safer and more efficient.



2. Replace storm sewers in the parking lot of the building. This project includes new storm piping and storm inlets. With the paving of the parking areas over the past years, water had been too often routed to the foundation of the building; water now is directed to the storm sewer. This project will protect the building's foundation. Work was done by the Whitpain Public Works staff.



3. Resurface the parking lot of the schoolhouse. What is completed now is the first phase of two that will be performed by Public Works staff. The second phase is scheduled for 2017 construction season.



4. Replace front steps and railings on the front steps to the front of the schoolhouse. This project retains the traditional look but makes for a safer entry to the building. Work was done by outside contractors.



5. New stucco to the schoolhouse and garage. Involving several steps, this project was the most visible one. The work was done by subcontractor Advanced Plastering of Worcester, PA.
6. New entrance doors to the building. This project included new and safer locks. Work was performed by **Art Forbes**, a local contractor.



7. Repair to the stone pillars on Skippack Pike. This work was done to repair the damage caused by a vehicle accident that demolished one of the pillars.



Ron noted that Township staff overseeing the multiple projects are **Tom Farzetta** - Assistant Director of Public Works, **Steve Bono** - Highway Supervisor, and **Jeff Riley**, Buildings Maintenance Supervisor. Many thanks to Whitpain Township for their continued stewardship for this historic corner.

SpringHouse Questers Support Photography Project

As Wissahickon School District celebrated its 50th anniversary, it has been a good time to review and reorganize our collections related to local schools. Until the mid 60s, Whitpain, Lower Gwynedd, and Ambler had their separate schools. Each entity had their own elementary schools and their high schools students attended high schools in Ambler, Norristown, Whitpain, and other neighboring districts.

In the last year we have received a number of donations related to Whitpain High School, Ambler High School, and Wissahickon Middle School and High School.



Some are unique items - for example, a football letter sweater from Ambler High School form **Frank Scardino, Jr.**

We also received two large milk crates of photos (several hundred photos) from Ambler High School, Wissahickon High School and Shady Grove Middle School. (See Girls' basketball team - 1960 - above right, National Honor Society - 1964 - left) These collections came with documentation provided by **Frank Licopolli** and



Buck Amey. Many photos have names listed on the back. (Good reminder for us all.)

We are in the process of accessioning these item and are thrilled to share the news that the SpringHouse Questers has recently donated \$800 which will be used to process and preserve these photos and other items related to our local schools.

Our plan is to organize photos and to scan them so that they can be shared on-line. Photos will be stored in protective folders and binders on site. It is fun to be reminded of the sports and band uniforms and the hair-dos of the 1930s through 1990s.

We are looking forward to sharing some of the photos with SpringHouse Questers at a future visit to SpringHouse Estates. **Thanks to SpringHouse Questers.** They have supported WVHS for a number of years on some important projects including installation of new shades in our library and second floor museum, stabilization and reframing of Mattison Estate stain-glass panel, and preservation and documentation of quilts of local significance.

EPA Seeks Input for Final BoRit Clean-up

Residents have until March 3 to share their ideas and opinions about the final steps in the clean-up of the 38-acre BoRit site which lies where Ambler Borough, Upper Dublin Township, and Whitpain Townships along the Wissahickon Creek and is bounded by Butler Pike and Maple Avenue. (Most of us know the spot as behind the now-gone McDonalds.) The site was used by the Keasbey & Mattison Co. as a disposal site for asbestos containing materials.

The proposed plan is available for public review online at epa.gov/ambler or semspub.epa.gov/ambler or at the Ambler branch of the Wissahickon Valley Public Library and the EPA public reading room.

To have a look at the site in person, it is possible to walk along the Wissahickon Creek and then back along Chestnut Street. It looks like it will be a great birding area though there is a fence that makes viewing difficult.

WVHS was recently given a series of photos of the original houses along Chestnut street by a gentleman who grew up there. They were torn down in the 1960s. He has agreed to be interviewed about the neighborhood. Look for a follow-up article on this.

Underground Railroad Museum to Open in Maryland

Our January meeting with a program on the Underground Railroad in Southeastern Pennsylvania was a big success. Thanks to the Blue Bell library for hosting our winter meetings.

The National Park System has announced that they will open an Underground Railroad Museum in Church Creek, Maryland (about 11 miles from Cambridge, Maryland.) It will open on March 11.

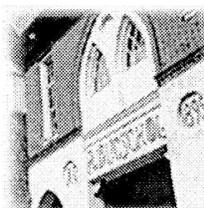
Mark Your Calendar

Monday, Feb. 13 - WVHS Monthly Meeting, Wissahickon Library - Blue Bell, **7 p.m.**

Monday, March 13 - WVHS Monthly Meeting, 1895 Schoolhouse - Program: Horace Trumbauer (1868-1938) - Philadelphia area architect - **7 p.m.**

Important Mattison Estate Hearing on February 21

A Conditional Use Hearing concerned with the proposed development of Mattison Estate has been rescheduled for February 21 at the Upper Dublin Township building at 6:30 p.m. The plans have evolved since first proposed; the most recent plans continue to involve housing for up to 350 residents including a multi-story building housing 250 senior living units, carriage homes, and townhouses - plus the resulting parking facilities. Very little open space would remain and the original landscape plan that Dr. Mattison created would be destroyed. The current plans are available on the Upper Dublin Township web-site. All plans do need to meet numerous conditions and standards. Some development of the site will certainly take place, but the current proposal is not a done deal. Ideally, development would enhance the site's historic status; current proposals would seriously compromise it. Please make every effort to attend the meeting and spread the word to friends and neighbors. A more creative plan is needed to enhance this irreplaceable landmark in our community



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