



Wissahickon Valley

historical society

Ambler
Lower Gwynedd
Whitpain

www.wvalleyhs.org

P.O. Box 96, Ambler, PA 19002

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Volume 16, Issue 5

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The Wissahickon Valley Historical Society
presents

A Quilting Bee - A Short History of Quilts and Tips about Their Care

The program will include sharing of quilts in the Society's
collections and those of members and visitors.

Detail of the Conard signature quilt
which is part of the WHVS's quilt
collection



Monday, January 12, 2015
7 p.m. (Please note earlier time.)
at the Wissahickon Valley Public Library
in Blue Bell, Skippack Pike

Please consider inviting someone who is interested in
quilts and/or local history. Bring your treasure to share.

Wissahickon Valley Historical Society www.wvalleyhs.org info@wvalleyhs.org
Serving Whitpain, Ambler, and Lower Gwynedd
Volume 16, Issue 5

Thanks

Thanks to **Dot MacDermott** for the lovely wreaths and arrangement that decorated the 1895 Schoolhouse.

Thanks to **Jean and Russ Bellavance** for hosting the WVHS annual holiday party.

Thanks to **MaryLou McFarland** for the member booklet. Merging the memberships of the HSW and WVHS made this an especially challenging and gratifying job.

Thanks to **Herman Ehret** for managing the transfer of HSW membership info.

Thanks to **Bob Whittock** for salvaging for the Schoolhouse a copy machine that can manage larger documents

Thanks to **Emmy Simon** for integrating and indexing the Clara Beck collections. Clara Beck was a prolific photographer of and writer about local history. Her diaries, photos (prints and negatives), and articles will be stored as a collection in Schoolhouse library.



Recent Donations

Joe Schneider stopped by the Schoolhouse on a recent Thursday morning with several items of interest. Joe donated an R5 rail sign. SEPTA no longer uses the number designation for its various lines; Ambler, Penllyn, and Lower Gwynedd are now on the “Doylestown line”. For years many of us caught the R5 on our way to Ambler from Center City. (Of course, we are also getting used to “Jefferson Station” in place of Market Street East Station.)

Joe also brought in a copy of *Reading Railroad Station Pictorial - Lines K-P*. We copied the sections about the Ambler, Penllyn, and Lower Gwynedd stations for our library.

The Ambler chapter describes the original Ambler station (a one-story frame construction 10’ x 40’ subdivided into three apartments: a 10’ x 12’ ladies’ waiting room, a 10’ x 18’ men’s waiting room, and a 10’ x 10’ ticket office.) After numerous complaints about service and accommodation from Dr. Mattison, a new station was built in 1889. Dr. Mattison had a lot of clout since Keasbey-Mattison, even in 1888, paid a monthly freight bill of \$5000 to the railroad and many of its workers traveled to and from work on the train.

According to the booklet, a Penllyn station existed as early as 1886. A new stone and brick passenger depot was constructed in 1902 at a cost of \$12,810.

A combination freight and passenger frame depot was built at Gwynedd Valley about 1888. A \$375 shelter was added in 1907. (Watch for a future article about how local agriculture products were taken to Gwynedd Valley station for shipment to the



Philadelphia market. You may be surprised at some of the products that were grown locally.)

In addition, Joe donated a black and white postcard of pre-fire Trinity Memorial Episcopal church on Bethlehem Pike. The original church building was financed by Dr. Mattison in honor of his daughter who died as a young child.

Thanks, Joe.

Mystery Site of the Month

Peg Kregel correctly identified the location of the stained glass window depicting the train crash that indirectly gave Ambler its name. The window is located in St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Ambler. It is on the side of the church facing the SEPTA parking lot and can be seen from the outside though the afternoon sun makes good viewing from the inside. The stain glass panel was part of a 1976 renovation of the church.



Peg asked about the arched feature (to the far left) in the photo of the stone wall along Mount Pleasant Avenue that was October's mystery site. The concrete arch protects the valves that controlled the water level in the private artificial pond above the wall. The water could be made to flow under Mount Pleasant and Maple Avenue according to Joe Schneider.

This month's mystery site is on a local walking trail. The bench honors Vietnam veterans and was sponsored by local Boy Scouts. A nearby wall and plaque honor WWII veterans. If you know in which park they are located, e-mail or call 215-5642-7753.



Silent Film Event at Ambler Theater

On Saturday evening January 3, the silent films Buster Keaton's *One Week* and Laurel and Hardy's *Big Business* will be shown at the Ambler Theater on Butler Pike. They will be accompanied by two young (Bucks County middle schoolers!) on a 3/20 theater organ. The pair have been performing at historic movie theaters throughout Pennsylvania and New Jersey. A short history of the theater is part of the young men's program. Check out details at www.amblertheater.org/films/short-films-musical-promise.

The Ambler Theater opened on Dec. 31, 1928. Built in a Spanish-Colonial style, it could seat 1228 patrons. It closed as a commercial theater in 1969/1970 and reopened as a Christian cinema from 1979 to 1997.

In 2001 it was taken over by a non-profit, membership operation. It now has 3 smaller theaters - though the largest one features the original stage details.

The original outside neon tower was taken down in the 1960's. It was restored in 2005 thanks to a Keystone Grant. The theater is a local treasure.

Whitpain Township Commission Votes Support for WVHS

In November WVHS President, **Russ Bellavance**, made a presentation to the budget committee of Whitpain Township Commission. He stressed the importance of the work we do for the community - especially the schools. We were very pleased when the Commission included in their 2015 Operating Budget a \$1000 grant to the WVHS. In addition the Commission offered their experts in various areas to help us develop a priority list for capital development. Included in that list will be work on the heating system and the electrical systems.

Many THANKS to Whitpain for their support.

Mark Your Calendar

January 3 - Silent movie festival at the Ambler Theater

January 12 - WVHS monthly meeting - 7 p.m. - Wissahickon Valley Public Library, Blue Bell - Program: *Quilts*

January 26 - Board meeting, 7:30 p.m.

February 9 - WVHS monthly meeting - 7 p.m. - 1895 Schoolhouse - Program: *Fundamental Concepts in the US Constitution* presented by Russ Bellavance



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