



Wissahickon Valley

historical society

Ambler  
Lower Gwynedd  
Whitpain

WVHS, Box 96, Ambler, PA 19002

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Wissahickon Valley Historical Society  
presents  
**\*Horace Trumbauer\***  
**Philadelphia's Gilded Age Architect**  
(1868-1938)  
Presented by  
David Roland

**at the 1895 Schoolhouse**  
**Come at 7 for light refreshments**  
**and talk.**  
**Program at 7:30 p.m**

Horace Trumbauer (1868-1938) was a very successful and prolific Philadelphia area architect. Local buildings designed by Horace Trumbauer include Keswick Theater (above) and what is now the headquarters of the Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association. (right and left) He also designed the Philadelphia Museum of Art.



## Update on Mattison Estate Development

Thanks to Ginny (ROSLE spokesperson) and to the Ambler Gazette for helpful coverage of the February 21 meeting about the proposed development of the Mattison Estate. The meeting covered many concerns and lasted until 11 p.m. At the end of the four hour meeting, the hearing was continued to 7 p.m. on Tuesday, March 14.

The conditional use hearing for the proposed residential development of the 45 acres revealed some deep concerns about the project from township board members and from residents.

Major areas of concern are: lack of open space provisions, lack of detail about landscaping (water retention, rain gardens, tree removal and replacement), access to the development from Bethlehem and Lindenwold/Cedar Rd., what is meant by senior facilities (now includes plan for assisted living and memory care rather than independent living), and the plans for the dam and lake. There was also concern expressed about the projected income to the school district and township.

The ever-evolving proposals seem to make any promises about the preservation of the castle a matter of deep concern.

For more details on the issues please refer to the February 26 issue of the Ambler Gazette or check the ROSLE website.



## Recent Donations

Joseph Cappucio donated a set of photos of Chestnut Street in West Ambler - taken in the 1950s. The whole row of houses were torn down in the 60s. Mr. Cappucio grew up there above the grocery store that his parents ran. He describes it as a wonderful community of families - most of whom were connected the Keasbey-Mattison facilities. Mr. Cappucio has agreed to be interviewed about growing up in the 40s in West Ambler so watch for his story.

Member Gary Fuess recently donated a display case that was constructed by his father Forest Fuess. Turns out that Gary, too, is a woodworker and has been helping repair some of the furniture in our collection.

## Education in Whitpain Township

In recent newsletter, the histories of schools in Lower Gwynedd Township and Ambler were presented. This month we are including a short history of the schools of Whitpain Township. Much of the following information comes from the *Whitpain... Crossroads in Time* and *Whitpain Township - A Tricentennial Reflections 1701-2001*. WVHS Bob Whittcock edited and added information.

Residents of Whitpain supported the education of their youth from its earliest days. The first schools in Whitpain were either in private homes or connected with churches. The earliest recorded school was Boehm's Church School which was organized in 1760.

About 1766, William Knox was teaching at a school at the corner of School Road and Skippack Pike - which is the site of the current headquarters of the WVHS.

In 1787 the Ellis School was opened at Washington Square.

In 1825 the Centerville School (also called the Centre Square School) opened in a single story building above DeKalb Pike on Skippack. In 1888 a second story was added to accommodate a high school. The high school closed in 1895 when the Whitpain High School which was closer to the center of the Township opened. The Centerville School building is now a private home (see right).



*Centre Square School Today, as a Private Home*



Beginning in 1809

Pennsylvania counties were required to support the education of poor children in their area. (A long list of children who benefited from this opportunity can be found at the Historical Society of Montgomery. This was the beginning of public education in our state.)

The Free School Act of 1834 required that "each district have a competent number of

common schools". During the early 1800s, several new schools opened: Centre Square (1825), Shady Hill (near what is now Wings Field and is now a private home - see above), and Center School (at School Road and Skippack).

Franklinville School (see right) served students off and on beginning in 1830. The James School at Mt. Pleasant and Morris opened in 1837 and closed in 1855 - replaced by Shady Grove further Lewis Lane.



The 1895 Schoolhouse opened to serve local elementary students and 9th through 11th grade students from throughout the Township. There was a large play area, a shed, and outhouses behind the school.

As the population increased, additional space was required. The brick building (now a Korean church) was opened and then enlarged in 1916 and again in the 1920s when 12th grade was added to the high school.

Whitpain High School graduated its last class in 1950. Subsequently, the Whitpain, Lower Gwynedd, and Ambler communities joined their school districts together. Seventh through twelfth grades took busses to Ambler Joint High School on Tennis in Ambler. Wissahickon School District became official in 1966.

The 1895 building was used intermittently through the early 1960s. In 1957 Blue Bell Elementary opened as did Shady Grove Junior High. Stony Creek opened in 1964.

In addition to Boehm's Church School, Whitpain has been home to several other private schools. Centre Square Seminary existed from 1879 to 1884 - just north-east of Skippack Pike and DeKalb Pike. Oak Lane Day School opened in 1916 on Stenton Avenue - closing in the early 2000s. St. Helena's School started in a house across DeKalb from the church site in 1948 and continues as an elementary school today.

**Special thanks** to members who donated above their regular 2016-2017 membership:

Judy Baigis	Lei Barry	Russ and Jean Bellavance	Alma Forman
The Croke family/J&J Matching gift	Herman and Monica Ehret		Bev Hahn
Tom and Marie Goldkamp	Jim and Peg Johnston	Jim and Peggy Quinn	
Fred and Carol Kreitchet	Bob and MaryLou McFarland	Eliza Walbridge	
Barbara and Steve Speece	Karen and Jules Tasca	Alan and Julia Tempest	
Bill and Bette Young	Mark Aston	Frank and Barbara Osinski/The Craig Foundation	

Extra funds are used for the purchase of materials to process, preserve, and share items in our collection. In 2016 we set up display cases at the Ambler, Borough and Lower Gwynedd Township, we framed and shared a deed of local interest with Whitpain Township, we are processing and organizing materials from our local schools, local businesses, and we have begun recording stories of local residents. We have been able to greatly increase our community outreach this year. We hope to set up a display case at the Whitpain Township building. The big new effort will be on making more of our collection available on line.

**Mark Your Calendar**

**Sunday, March 12** - Charter Day at Hope Lodge (and other state historic sites) - house tours - 12 to 4 p.m.

**Monday, March 13** - WVHS Monthly meeting - 1895 Schoolhouse - Program: Horace Trumbauer 7 - light refreshment, 7:30 - program

**Tuesday, March 14** - Hearing on development of Mattison Estate - Upper Dublin Township Building, 7 p.m.

**Sunday, March 19** - Open House, 1895 Schoolhouse - 1 to 4 p.m.

**Monday, March 27** - WVHS board meeting, Bellavance home, 7:30 p.m.

**Saturday, April 22** - WVHS afternoon outing - visit to Manderlay (Morris Road and Penllyn Pike) and to the Yost log cabin on Lewis Lane. Watch for details in the April newsletter.

**WVHS Market Day will be Saturday, May 6. See web-site for vendor application. Volunteers are welcome for various activities before and on May 6.**



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