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The Franklinville One-room School Its History and Its Future

Monday, November 9 at 7:30 p.m.
at the 1895 Schoolhouse
Skippack Pike and School Rd.

Program followed by light refreshments and good
conversation.

Presenters: Marie Goldkamp and Carolyne Wurzer

The Franklinville School on Morris Road was built in 1858 and has served the community in various way ever since. Many Wissahickon School District students visited it as part of their study of local history. Beginning in 1983, members of the Whitpain Historical Society invested much time and effort in saving the building for future generations. The building was listed on the National Registry of Historic Places in December 2014.



Recent Donations

Numerous scrapbooks and photos from the **Colony Club of Ambler** were recently brought to the WVHS by Buck Amey. According to the September 23, 1987 edition of the Ambler Gazette, the Colony Club of Ambler was started in the summer of 1912. Women's clubs of that era offered cultural and civic advantages to women who were usually homemakers. The club's charter stated that its purpose was "to create among women an organized center of thought and action, and to promote such public measures as shall be conducive to community welfare."



The scrapbooks record many activities carried out by the group which had its headquarters at a building at Ridge Avenue and Race Street. The building had been the home of the First

Methodist Episcopal Church of Ambler (now Calvary United Methodist) and later of the Knights of Malta.

Over the years the Colony Club members took on numerous local causes. In the 1920s they spoke out and acted in favor of the environment in Ambler. One effort involved a water wagon that was used to wash the streets every Saturday night.

The Ambler Public Library had its beginnings when in 1923 the Colony Club purchased 12 books for \$20. During WWII the Colony Club organized a Red Cross chapter. Wool for knitting was distributed and garments and surgical supplies were provided to the Red Cross in Philadelphia.

If anyone has information to supplement this collection - especially more recent information, it would be very welcome.

WVHS member Mike Fondots recently explored the site of the old Shady Grove one-room schoolhouse on Lewis Lane. He donated several items that he found to the historical society. They include several coins, a spoon, and a Morris Seiz Liberty Bell medal from the early 1900s. The front reads "Award for Highest Average" and the front of the bell reads "Morris Seiz Liberty Bell Medal 1776 Awarded for proficiency in scholarship and deportment." (I used to show my students my report card from the 1950s that had a F in deportment. I had them guess what deportment meant. They were shocked when I told them deportment meant behavior; I chewed gum and talked a lot in class. Peg Johnston)



On-line research revealed that Morris Seiz arrived from Germany in 1854 and owned a shoe company - M. Seiz and Co. - which ranked among the leading shoe company in the Midwest. The Seiz family has had a long-standing commitment to scholarship and education. In 1903, Morris Seiz created the one of the first scholarships at the University of Chicago awarded to the woman with the best grade point average at the end of her freshman year.

Web-site Suggestion

An interesting web-site for those interested in 20th century history is www.historicaerials.com. It provides aerial photos of locations all over the United States taken at regular intervals from the 1930s on. Thanks to Mike Fondots for this information. Lots of neat views of our area - probably thanks to early photography out of Wings Field.

Local Good News

The North Penn Valley **Boys and Girls Club** plans to build a \$10 million clubhouse in West Ambler. The club is under contract for a property on Railroad Avenue near Mount Pleasant Avenue. The new clubhouse would offer after-school and summer programs to students age 6 to 18 who live in the Wissahickon School District. According to an Ambler Gazette article, Boys and Girls Club's Bob Kreamer said that construction could begin within a year and the club would allow the organization to expand and work with hundreds of children. It already sponsors a program for 35 students in West Ambler.



Other good news for West Ambler are the plans for the former AmChem/BASF site as **Ambler Yards**. The developers plan to use existing buildings for office and lab spaces as well as added construction on the site along Spring Garden Ave. and Brookside Ave. Check out their web-site and their plans for creative re-use of existing construction.

The Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association recently acquired a key property in Lower Gwynedd. The 16-acre Byrne Family Farm on Welsh Road and Cambridge Drive contains the

headwaters of the Trewellyn Creek which feeds into the Wissahickon Creek. The farm had been in the Byrne family since 1937.

WVHS Speaks to Quester Group

Marie Goldkamp and Carolyn Wurzer, presented a program about the Franklinville School to the Questers at Normandy Farm in October. They reviewed the history of building from its construction in 1858 through its rescue by a group of Whitpain residents in the late 20th century. Questers were interested in numerous artifacts that were connected to the schoolhouse. Marie also explained how the building was finally put on the National Registry of Historic Places in 2014. Carolyn detailed some of the challenges (both physical and political) faced in the reclamation of the school.



As a complement to the program, the Blue Bell Quester quilt was brought to share. It was a happy choice since the designer of the quilt, Evelyn McAdams, is a resident of Normandy Farms Estates and came to the meeting with her daughter. (See left.) Evelyn shared stories of the quilt's construction - including how quilters would dress in colonial costumes and quilt at local events.

Make your calendar

November 5 - "Protecting Green Spaces in Ambler" - Tea and Scones at the Ambler Library - 7 p.m.

November 7 and 8 - 10 to 4 - Rain or shine - Whitmarsh Encampment at Hope Lodge - The 34th annual encampment re-enactment. The event commemorates the 1777 encampment in the Whitmarsh Hills by George Washington and the Continental Army before they moved to Valley Forge for the winter. British and American troops will set up camp and "skirmish" using tactics of the Revolutionary War. Hope Lodge mansion will also be open for tours. \$8 - adults, \$5 - seniors, \$20 - family/one car

November 9 - WVHS monthly meeting - 7:30 p.m. - 1895 Schoolhouse - See front page.

November 10 - "How to Find Your Family Roots - Genealogy" Tea and Scones at the Ambler Library - 7 p.m.

November 15 - WVHS 1895 Schoolhouse Open House - 1 to 4 p.m.

November 17 - Fort Washington Historical Society monthly meeting - 7:30 p.m. - Program: Buildings by Architect Horace Trumbauer in Montgomery County - Presented by David Rowland

Membership Reminder

The 2015-2016 membership forms with the program list were mailed in September. Please return to MaryLou McFarland, 500 Trinity Place, Ambler, PA 19002-5836. Sending the newsletter by e-mail saves the society about \$1 per issue. Last minute updates are also possible via e-mail. Please consider giving a \$10 gift membership to someone who is interested in local history and education. Membership supports the continued work of the historical society.



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