



Wissahickon Valley

historical society

Ambler  
Lower Gwynedd  
Whitpain

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The Wissahickon Valley Historical Society  
presents The U.S. Constitution:  
**Interpretation and  
Current Issues**  
Presented by Russ Bellavance



1895 Schoolhouse -  
Skippack Pike in Blue Bell  
Monday, November 14 at 7:30 p.m.  
Public is invited. Program followed by light refreshments.  
The WWI exhibit has several additions.  
Recent donations on display.  
Membership renewals welcome.

## Mark Your Calendar

Thursday, **Nov. 3** - "The History of Valley Forge National Park" - Historical Society of Montgomery County - 5 p.m.

Friday, **Nov. 4** - "Night Life" - Peter Wentz Farmstead - 7:30 to 8:50 p.m. Pre-register at 610-584-5104

Saturday, **Nov. 5** - Revolutionary War re-enactment, Hope Lodge, Fort Washington

Wednesday, **Nov. 9** - History of the Liberty Bell Trolley (Whitpain's High-Speed Rail) Whitpain Township Building, 7:30 p.m.

Thursday, **Nov. 10** - Upper Dublin - A Photographic History - 7 p.m. - Upper Dublin library - presenters: Robin Costa and Buck Amey

**Monday, Nov. 14 - WVHS Monthly Meeting, 1895 Schoolhouse, 7:30 p.m.**

Saturday, **Nov. 19** - Walking Tour of Doylestown - 215-345-9430

**Sunday, Nov. 20 - Open House at 1895 Schoolhouse and Franklinville School - 1 to 4 p.m.**

Saturday, **Dec. 3** - Candlelight Tours - Peter Wentz Farmstead - 3 to 9 p.m.

**Sunday, Dec. 11 - Members' Holiday Party**

## 2016-17 Memberships Welcome

MaryLou McFarland, WVHS membership chairperson, is working on the membership booklet for 2016-2017. If you haven't already done so, please consider sending in your membership info and dues. Dues support the work of the WVHS - outreach to community organizations, monthly programs, and care of displays and collections. Members receive the monthly newsletter and invitation to special events - including an interesting spring outing. If you have misplaced your membership letter, a form is available at the group's website - [www.wvalleyhs.org](http://www.wvalleyhs.org).

Our new membership brochure have received many compliments. Please consider sharing one with someone who might be interested in joining us.

## Work Continues of 1895 Schoolhouse

Please take time to drive by the 1895 Schoolhouse during the next days. The stucco is almost off and new stucco will be applied soon. Under the stucco, workers revealed beautiful stone work with brick over each window frame on the outside walls. On the bell tower and porch, intricate lath and plaster was under the stucco. Over the years water damage had loosened the old stucco. Whitpain Township realigned the drainage during recent driveway work so the new stucco should be good for years to come.

Franklinville School has had some grading work done as well. Several of its windows have been reframed by WVHS family member Aaron Quinn.



## WWI Memorials Report

As mentioned in an earlier newsletter, WVHS member Barry Johnson has been researching local WWI memorials as part of a national project. This is part of the commemorations of the centennial of the U.S. entering the war in April 1917. Thanks to those members - including Jerry Miklosh - for tips on local memorials.

Barry has found two types of memorials. One type is a memorial to all who served with those who killed marked with a star. The other type is a memorial only to those who were killed.

St. John's Lutheran church in Ambler has the second type. There is a brass plaque inside the church (see



photo at left) with a star next to the name of Lyman Rohr.

According to church records he was a founding member of the church. In the yard of the parsonage next door almost hidden under a tree, there is an American Legion marker honoring Lyman Rohr.

If you know of any memorials for WWI veterans, please contact the WVHS and the information will be passed to Barry.

Barry shared several recommended sources of information about WWI:

*The Guns of August* (covers the first month of the war) and *The Proud Tower* (covers the 25 years leading up to the war) by Barbara Tuchman,

*Over Here: The First World War and American Society* by David Kennedy,

*To Conquer Hell: The Meuse-Argonne, 1918 the Epic Battle That Ended the First World War* by Edward G. Lengel

*Philadelphia in the World War 1914-1919*, Philadelphia War History Committee - available as an e-book on-line.

*My Experience in the World War*, by John J. Pershing. (An aside: we are looking for information on Pershing Rd. in Lower Gwynedd.)

Free on You-tube: *The Great War* (BBC 1964)

*All Quiet on the Western Front* - a classic piece of fiction about a German soldier in WWI - about any soldier in any war.



Other reading suggestion or book reviews are welcome.

## Recent Donation Documents Local Agricultural History

Bob Whittock recent donated a plaque that he had received from Mike Snowden. The plaque came from Mike's father-in-law, Howard L. Baker. Howard Baker owned a farm that was along Skippack Pike. It was later developed as the apartment complex Whitpain Hills. The Hurst family originally settled the farm and owned it for over 150 years. A Hurst family young woman married into the Baker family who farmed the land until 1956.

The plaque states that it was awarded by Norristown Times Herald at the Montgomery County Products Show. It was presented to the Center Square Grange #1774 in 1930.



The Center Square Grange had a prominent building north-east of the intersection of Skippack Pike and DeKalb Pike/202. (See left). The National Grange, founded in 1867, is the nation's oldest general farm and rural public interest organization. It early gave full voice to woman and worked with African-American farmers after the Civil War.

Grange has sponsored fairs to provide entertainment, education, and a showcase for local agriculture production. They have also been active politically working to pass state and federal legislation to support the agricultural.

There were many farms in the Whitpain area in the 1800s and early 1900s. The Zimmerman farm was well known for its dairy and general farming. We know that asparagus and strawberries were grown near the current Wings Field and transported via Penllyn station to Reading Terminal Market in Philadelphia. It would be interesting to know of other farm products from the area.

A preview for a spring outing: We have been invited to Mandalay Farm at the corner of Morris Road and Penllyn/Blue Bell. It was first settled in the mid-1700s.



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