

Wissahickon Valley

historical society

Ambler
Lower Gwynedd
Whitpain

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Volume 14, Issue 2

September/October Events

Monday, September 10 - get together and set up for flea market -
6 p.m. (to take advantage of day-light)
at the 1895 Schoolhouse. Board meeting at 6:30 p.m.

Thursday, September 14 - fall cleaning of collection - 10 to noon at the
Schoolhouse

(We'll be vacuuming, dusting, etc. the museum upstairs and setting up for
the flea market.)

Saturday, September 22 - Montgomery Co. History Fair -
Augustus Lutheran Church, 717 West Main Street, Trappe
We will have a booth with the Historical Society of Whitpain.

The booth will focus on education in the the late 1800s and early 1900s.
Volunteers to help at the booth are needed. Call Russ.

Tuesday, September 25 - Joint Monthly Meeting with the Historical Society
of Whitpain at the **Wissahickon Valley Public Library - Blue Bell at 7:15**
Program: The Morris Arboretum

WVHS Market Day/Flea Market **Saturday, October 13**

Items for the Flea Market and for the Bake Sale are welcome.

Set up is Friday evening, October 12.

Volunteers needed for Flea Market.

Please call Josephine (610-277-8968) to donate items
and/or volunteer an hour or two.

This is our major fund raiser of the year.

Vendors wanted: Call Bob N. at 215-699-1288

Taking Care of Our Treasures

Storage of Items on Paper - from American Institute for Conservation of Art and Historic Works - www.conservation-us.org

Paper is damaged by prolonged contact with chemically unstable materials as well as light (discussed in last month's news letter) . Mats, folders, and storage boxes should be made of cotton rag or chemically purified woodpulp - buffered to a pH of 7.5 to 10 (non acid). Matboard and folders should be rigid enough to provide adequate support. Items should be stored in mats or within individual enclosures that are larger than the items.

Newspapers and other highly acidic materials should be stored separately. (The Archival Collections Survey Report on our collection that was completed by this summer as part of the Hidden Collections Initiative for Pennsylvania Small Archival Repositories project - funded by a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation - suggested that we make copies of newspaper articles on non-acid paper.)

Paper items that are matted or foldered should be stored in flat files or in appropriately sized boxes specifically designed for storing works of art or documents. Oversized objects should be stored flat whenever possible - not rolled or folded.

Adhesives used to attach artwork to mats must be chemically stable, non-staining, and readily removable.

Much of the WVHS's paper items are stored in acid free boxes that have been purchased over the years. Individual items are being placed - as time allows - in clear sheet protectors that are PVC, latex, and acid free. Boxes of these sheets are available at office supply stores. Acid free mats are available at craft stores. We have been purchasing acid free boxes and acid free folders from Gaylord Bros. Inc. - though there are other catalogue sources as well.

Volunteers are always welcome as we update storage of collections. Stop by on a Thursday morning. A box can be processed in one session.

Feedback from *Hidden Collections Initiative for Pennsylvania Small Archival Repositories Visit*

Last December two Project Surveyors, Celia Caust-Ellenbogen and Michael Gubicza, spent a day at the 1895 Schoolhouse surveying our archival collections. Their work was part of a project of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania whose goal is "to make better known and more accessible the important but often hidden archival collections held by the many small, primarily volunteer-run historical organizations in the Philadelphia area." They focused on collections on paper. The project is funded by a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

In July we received their report and suggestions. Our general local history collection, the J.E. Marsden technical drawings, the Floyd R. Schneider papers, the Strassburger family photographs and papers, the WVHS ledger collection, the AmChem Products Inc. records, the WVHS deed collection, and the WVHS map and atlas collection will be listed on and can be linked to on the Historical Society of Pennsylvania website.

Their report also included notes on Preservation Issues and Resources. Their report is available at the Schoolhouse, but we will be working on the following suggestions:

- * Organizing the kitchen area so that food and beverages are kept away from the collections.
- * Establishing policies for use of the archival materials.
- * Completing the installation of shades in the museum and library.

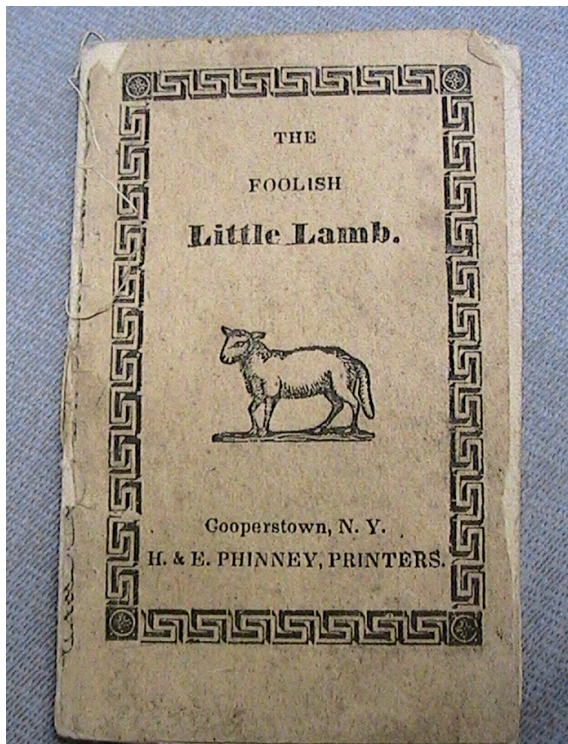
- * Moving collections away from heat sources.
- * Monitoring humidity levels and, if necessary and possible, purchase a room dehumidifier.
- * Organizing and placing in archival folders materials that are currently stored in archival boxes.
- * Removing metal paper clips, scotch tape, and rubber bands from archival materials.
- * Setting up a regular schedule of housekeeping.

Most of these suggestions involve work that can be done in chunks - in short periods of time. If you have a couple of hours, please consider volunteering. Call 215-542-7753 or stop by on a Thursday morning from 10 to 12.

Chapbooks - by Emmy Simon

From the 17th to the 19th centuries chapbooks were sold on the streets, markets, and fairs by peddlers and street-criers for a penny or less. Chapbooks are small paper-covered booklets measuring about 4 inches and usually printed on a single sheet folded into books of 8, 12, 16, or 24 pages and were often stitched together. There were often illustrated with crude woodcuts.

It is believed that the word “chap” is related to the work “cheap”, but it is also related to the Anglo-Saxon work “ceapian” which means to barter, buy and sell.



For the average person in England and America, chapbooks were staple reading-matter of the time. Before chapbooks, the only literature for the average person was oral and consisted of traditional songs and tales. A written or printed book was a luxury and was obtainable only by the few who could afford it. With the introduction and growth of printing, learning to read and write developed among the masses and there was a great demand for reading materials.

Chapbooks were printed on the cheapest grade of paper, made from rag stock, which ironically is the reason so many have survived. (Note reference to rag paper in the article about storage of paper items above.) The printing was crude and the woodcuts that were used to illustrate the books were worn or battered blocks.

Before the 19th century, books were for adults and the text was greatly abridged subjects of romances, ballads, popular tales, and famous books. By 1800, the chapbooks were written for children and contained nursery rhymes, fairy

tales, history, and adventure stories.

By 1860's they gradually disappeared not only because of the explosion in the amount of cheap printed matter, but also because of the strong competition from religious tract societies which printed chapbooks on the subject of morals and behavior.

Despite their shortcomings by today's standards, the chapbook provided reading material for children at a time when libraries were emerging from private to community supported institutions.

(Our museum contains several chapbooks. Check them out next time you visit.)

Recent Donations

* **book - Horse Power to Horsepower - Remembering the J.G. Rempp & Son Blacksmith Shop** by Bob Moyer. Mr. Moyer is the grandson of Julius Rempp of SpringHouse and the book is filled with personal remembrances and photos.

Mr. Moyer, who now lives in North Carolina, also donated CD copies of the 1871 and 1877 maps of Whitpain Township.

* **chapbooks** - by Emmy Simon. See article about Chapbooks on the preceding page.

* **book - A Century of Cultivation - 1911-2011** - 100 Years from the Pennsylvania School of Horticulture for Women to Temple University - Ambler - by Jean and Russ Bellavance

* **wooden label for a load of building materials** - by Joe Schneider. The wooden "label" (a 1 by 6 board, 18 inches long) carries the address "Liedy B. Heckler, Ambler, Penn" and would have been attached to a wagon load of lumber, etc. used to build houses in Ambler. Leidy B. Heckler I and Leidy B. Heckler II were major builders for Dr. Mattison in Ambler in the early 1900s.

Watch for Membership Renewals - coming in the mail this month. Please consider a gift membership for a neighbor and/or friend for an additional \$10.

Newsletter articles are always welcome. In next month's newsletter meet another local artist who also happens to be a long-time member.



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