



Wissahickon Valley

historical society

Ambler
Lower Gwynedd
Whitpain

www.wvalleyhs.org

P.O. Box 96, Ambler, PA 19002

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Looking Ahead

September 12 - Monday - WVHS Monthly Meeting
Meet and Greet/Member Share
1895 Schoolhouse - 7:30 p.m.

September 18 - Sunday
Whitpain Community Open House
Numerous religious and civic groups will be open from
1 to 5 p.m. (Franklinville School from 1 to 4 p.m.)
See page 3 for details and ways members can participate.

Watch for membership renewals coming in the mail in September.
Dues help support the Society's activities - especially in the schools and community.
This past year we set up exhibits in each of Wissahickon's four elementary schools, the
Blue Bell Public library, Ambler Borough, and Lower Gwynedd Township building.
WVHS speakers provided programs to several Quester and community groups.

Mark Your Calendar

Peter Wentz Farmstead -

Saturday, August 13th from 10 to 4 - "House Cleaning"

Sunday, August 28th at 2 p.m. - Lecture - "Cherished Paintings and
Revolutionary War Propaganda"

Ambler -

Friday, August 5 - First Friday from 6 to 9 p.m.

Saturday, August 6 - Farmers' Market from 9 to 1 a.m. (every Sat. in
August) - Dog Days from 10 to 1

Wissahickon Valley Historical Society - Serving Lower Gwynedd, Ambler, and Whitpain

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Eagle Scout Project Benefits Franklinville School

Kannah Ramanathan chose to organize his fellow scouts to complete several projects at our Franklinville School site as he works to earn the Eagle Scout rank.

After careful planning and organizing, the big work day was Saturday, July 2. The crew scraped and painted the

ceiling and walls of the rear entry way of the building. They cleaned the rear patio as well as the garden in front along Morris Road.

A second bench for the front porch will complete the project. Many thanks to all those who helped make the work day a success. Marie Goldkamp and Dot MacDermott were both very impressed with the young men's hard work.



The Franklinville School is now safer and better looking. The WVHS board recently voted to deal with a water issue along the east wall of the Franklinville building. This will involve some fill and replacement of a couple of windows.

Being good stewards of our historic buildings is a priority for the WVHS.

Work Continues on 1895 Schoolhouse

The latest project at the 1895 Schoolhouse involves replacing the basement and fire escape doors with solid wooden doors that close completely and can be locked. For the last few years closing and locking the fire escape doors has been a challenge, but the new doors also help the building meet fire codes. Thanks to Ken Houch and Pete DePollo for their excellent work.

The new front entry stairs now have attractive railings that make the front entry safer and welcoming. Thanks to Whitpain Township workers for the new entry and for the patching of the driveway.

Thanks to member Neal Bradley for his excellent work on internal doors at the 1895 Schoolhouse. Special thanks for the new lock on the bathroom door.

September 18 - Whitpain Community Open House

At least 10 Whitpain organizations will take part in a community-wide open house on September 18 from 1 to 5 p.m. (Franklinville School will be open from 1 to 4) Religious and civic organizations will welcome visitors with special tours and activities.

WVHS member Bob Whittock suggested the idea and has been the moving force in planning and organizing the event. Numerous businesses and groups will be featured in an informational booklet that will include a map of open houses as well as information on participating organizations. If you would like to sponsor as an ad, please contact Bob at 610-279-5354.

Both the 1895 Schoolhouse and Franklinville School will be open and feature tours and activities for children. Docents are needed. If you are able to volunteer for all or part of the four hours, please contact Russ Bellavance or Marie Goldkamp.

Lower Gwynedd Board Welcomes WVHS Exhibit

Lower Gwynedd commissioners voted at their July 26th meeting to host a display case from the WVHS. Township workers will pick up the showcase next week and the first collection will be in place by mid-month. The exhibit will be changed every three months and feature items from the WVHS collections on Lower Gwynedd. The first exhibit includes items about Sally Wister, a visitor to Penllyn during the Revolutionary War, and early businesses in the SpringHouse area.

Future exhibits will focus on local education and local industry (AmChem and Marsden Glass). WVHS member Herb Levy will be advising us on local history. Many items in our collection were donated by Joe Schneider.

The display case in Ambler Borough building has been up since early July and has received good comments.

Ambler/Wissahickon School Yearbooks

In response to a request about Ambler High School yearbooks, Buck Amey and the WVHS assembled a list of yearbooks in their collections. One issue missing from both of our collections is the 1947 R.Ambler.

We welcome items related to both Ambler High School, Whitpain Public School, and Wissahickon School District.

Request for Mannequins/Life-sized Dolls

Marie Goldkamp recently visited the Worcester Historical Society (well worth a visit) where they have recently organized an exhibit which replicates a one-room schoolhouse. In addition to desks, books, old photos, it includes two life-sized dolls dressed in eighteenth century clothing. The WVHS has some 19th and 20th century children's clothing but no mannequins to display them. Dolls or mannequins should be sized 1 to 4. Adult and children mannequins or partial body mannequins are also welcome. Please contact Marie at 215-542-8845 for more information.

Quester/WVHS Article in Enterprise

The July issue of Enterprise contained a long article about the SpringHouse Quester grant to the WVHS to fund media transfers. Thanks again, Questers!

Keeping The Record

The following is from the newsletter of the DeForest Area Historical Society - my hometown in Wisconsin.

We Can't Save Every Old House

But we can preserve records and memories houses that were part of our history. A house built by Robert Heisig, who was in the tin business, occupied the northeast corner of Holum and Main where the new Norske Nook now stands.

Heisig's house replaced the earlier construction erected there by George Durkee after he bought the lot in 1872. Durkee, who served as postmaster, used the site for a residence, general store, and post office. In 1895 he built a dam on the Yahara River behind his house. He created a pond that was used for cutting ice, swimming, and ice skating.

Locally we have lost a number of buildings this past year. Each has a story. We should be taking photos and recording stories - including names. For example: the house on



Morris Road just south of the Cathcart, the house known locally as the West house, is being razed. The house itself was rebuilt in the early 1900s after the original house (dating back to Revolutionary era) burned. Family owners over the years include: Syfert, Styer, Rile, Heist, and Thayer - before Edward and Gloria West bought the farm in the 1960s. In the early 2000s, new owners wanted to build a horse farm. When zoning issues arose, it was decided to sub-divide the farm. The above information comes from Whitpain...Crossroads in Time and from Bob Whittock.

In Ambler, the stately building at the corner of Main and Butler is being painted and cleaned and looking ready for a new use. Looks like reuse will save this building.

There are several historic homes on Penllyn Pike that are for sale. One of special interest is the Orthodox House - the subject of a newsletter article in the past. Hopefully they all find appreciative buyers.



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