
Wissahickon Valley Historical Society ~ Volume 4, Number

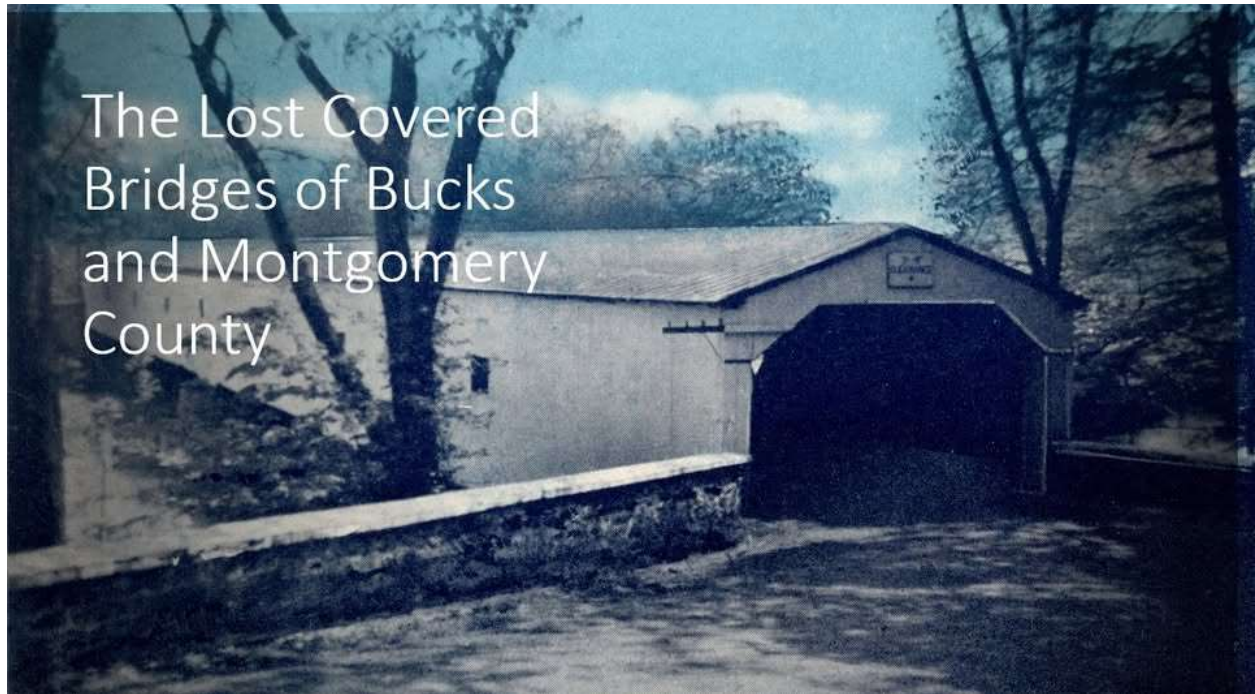
The Valley Crier 

March 2025.....Celebrating our 50th Year

All are Welcome! **Announcing our March speaker: Monday, March 10 at 7 PM. Speaker Scott Bomboy, journalist and historian, on “The Lost Covered Bridges of Bucks and Montgomery County.”**

At one time, Bucks County and neighboring Montgomery County had 79 covered bridges. Today, only 12 remain—all in Bucks County. Why is the covered bridge extinct in Montgomery County? And what act led to the preservation of today’s surviving local bridges?

R. Scott Bomboy is an author and historian who has frequently written about local history. He is the author of “Wooden Treasures: The Story of Bucks County’s Covered Bridges,” and the “American Hometown” book series about Perkasie. Bomboy is also chair of the Bucks County Covered Bridge Society. In his journalism career, Bomboy has received five Edward R. Murrow awards in television, and he currently is the editor of the National Constitution Center.



March Meeting, Auction Item: As a fund-raiser we will auction off a gift certificate to Applebee's and a year's membership for 2 to the Ambler Theatre.

WVHS Turns 50 This Year: If you would like to help with events and programming to celebrate our 50th year, please let us know. A committee is being formed now. Email to Info@WValleyHS.org

The WVHS February Meeting Featured "Show and Tell": The green tablecloths were out as we celebrated once again the Eagles' Super Bowl victory, creating a comfortable setting for our annual "Show and Tell." Eight members presented an object that held importance to them.

- Sandy Zebe, her father's 1906 sixth-grade diploma from Spain. It was large, framed, and decorative, fitting for a great accomplishment. For his era, it was important. He finished school at age 12, and then trained as a cabinet maker, coming to the United States in the 1920s.

- Jen Zwetolitz, a friend's Vietnam War helmet from the 101st Airborne 1st Division, U.S. Army. She noted its remarkable weight, describing how it was used for protection during helicopter transport. The audience imagined jumping into and out of a helicopter with this item on our heads.
- Frank Russo, a clear plastic box containing an original 1789 inaugural button for George Washington! Frank said he found it in a drawer and had forgotten that he had the precious item.
- Joe Langella, many books on the history of Gwynedd, including *Sally Wister's Journal*, a history of Foulkeways, a history of the Church of the Messiah, 1866-1966, *Gleanings from the Gwynedd Literary Association*, and a *Friends Almanac*, a directory used by Quaker travelers to locate a meeting time and location.
- Carol Kalos, a 1900s cast-iron coin bank, the only remaining item from her grandparents' house fire in 1917. She was reminded of the bank while watching the devastation of the California wildfires. She also brought the only photograph of the destroyed farm house, originally a wayside tavern during the early 1800s. She showed the location of the wagon ruts in the farm's fields, left there as Washington's 10,000 troops moved to the Pittsburgh area to put down the Whiskey Rebellion.
- Barry Johnson, a pair of Navy WWII binoculars, made by the Square D Company. During WWI, the United States had no optics industry, so it had difficulty purchasing lenses needed by its troops.
- Russ Bellavance, a book on the history of *Boat House Row* by Dottie Brown. Rowing was the most popular sport at the time the boat houses were built, and Philadelphia was the center of the sport. The boat houses were designed by famous architects, such as Frank Furness. Boat House Row is the most photographed location in the city.
- Judy Baigis, an 1824 patient's "admissions document" to Pennsylvania Hospital. This example was for a patient with consumption, today called tuberculosis. The patient, on admission, had to agree to pay for any damages to the facility.

President Carol Kalos pointed out that the story behind an object is as important as the object itself. As items are accessioned to our museum, the story of the item is recorded and preserved. Sadly, in some cases, WVHS does not know the background.



President Carol Kalos at Show and Tell with a message that the stories behind the objects are just as important as the objects themselves.

Local History Treasures Wanted: Do you have items tucked away in your attic or basement that reflect life along the Wissahickon in decades gone by? WVHS is on the lookout for artifacts, photos, documents, or any pieces of history related to our area's past. Whether it is a family heirloom, an event t-shirt, an event program, or a vintage photograph of a building or landscape, we would like to hear about them! Help us celebrate our community's rich history. Please contact Info@WValleyHS.org.

Campaign to Preserve the Franklinville School Continues: Thousands of dollars are still needed to complete the work being done at the Franklinville School. During these winter months, the shutters are being removed, the rotten wood replaced, and the shutters primed. On the building's exterior, the stucco needs repairs, waterproofing, and painting.

This work is essential to keeping the structure. Please make your check payable to "WVHS" and mail it to WVHS, P.O. Box 96, Ambler, PA 19002. Or you can donate using *Venmo* or *PayPal*: At <https://www.wvalleyhs.org/>, click "Donate" and follow the prompts. WVHS is most grateful for donations of any size. Thank you!



News from Boehm's Church and Cemetery: Frances Slingluff writes that the church cemetery will be 250 years old next year! This year at the cemetery, there were two burials, and the cemetery has rebuilt its very-old wall. Slingluff says she read the February 2025 *Crier* and checked on the link to the list of historical markers, discovering that the list goes only to 2008, so it is incomplete. It overlooked the marker for John Phillip Boehm, dedicated in 2018. It is believed to be the only state historical marker in Whitpain Township! The *Times Herald* article, with details covering the event, is here: <https://www.timesherald.com/2018/07/23/historical-marker-installed-at-whitpain-church/> .



Montgomery County Accepting Applicants for *America250*

Commission: Help the county celebrate 1776 (and represent WVHS).

Deadline is March 14. For details and an application, go to

<https://www.montgomerycountypa.gov/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=4607>



Eagles News: We all know about that Super Bowl win, but as history folks we see the eagle as a symbol of the USA, representing strength and freedom. It was chosen by the Second Continental Congress in 1782 because the bald eagle is the only eagle native to North America. Did Ben Franklin prefer the wild turkey? The Franklin Institute says that is a myth.



PA Humanities, “Discovery Project,” Summary Report, 2024: On the topic of “History and Preservation,” the report (page 32) states, “Engagement with history and preservation ... is aiming for greater inclusivity... [uncovering] untold stories and ... connecting us to social justice and environmental justice. By selecting the items and the histories we are going to preserve, we are responsible for determining what future generations will be able to learn.”

On the topic of “Human Flourishing & Happiness,” the report goes on to say that the humanities help us to discover prosperity and meaning in our lives, a fundamental human right. There are qualities of life that are fundamental to human flourishing and happiness -- beyond economics. Moreover, individuals require freedom to engage in humanities activities. This freedom promotes social justice, transformation, and the empowerment of communities. The approach aligns with the UNESCO’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights from 1948: everyone’s right to culture.

Research links the humanities with the happiness we experience when we live a life of meaning and purpose. The humanities benefit humanity because they connect us with our shared human past and lead us towards a more sustainable future.



Statement on Current Events, American Association for State and Local History (AASLH): “The history community should reject efforts to define patriotism as [only a] ... celebration of America. ... Our field is at its best when we share the whole history of our communities, states, and nations. As we approach the nation’s 250th and beyond, history organizations must remain committed to building historical understanding by advancing critical thinking skills, embracing complexity, and exploring the full sweep of the American past.”



Goals Statement, National Trust for Historic Preservation, January 2025: “Key advocacy for ...the nation’s 250th Anniversary; sharing with policy makers that **historic preservation ... aligns with broader social objectives**. Historic preservation is, for example, an economic driver that **creates jobs and leads to community revitalization**. Historic preservation supports the **preservation, retention, and creation of housing**; and preserving our built environment **saves money and is more sustainable than unchecked demolition**. And at its best, historic preservation supports the broad **retelling of our history that captures the interest and imagination of all Americans**.”



The 1895 School and Franklinville School Are Open for Tours: For an appointment for a tour of either (or both), please email to Info@WValleyHS.org.

WVHS Volunteer/New-Member Orientation: If you are a new member and/or want to be to help with an Open House, please plan to attend a short “training” session at a time convenient for you. RSVP to Info@WValleyHS.org.

Volunteer Day is Thursdays, 12-3 PM: Note the new time. Please come to the 1895 School to spend an hour or two assisting WVHS. We need help with cleaning and accessioning.

Topics from the Board of Directors’ meeting in February:

- Themes for the 2025-2026 Open Houses will center on the WVHS 50th anniversary celebration and America 250
- Verco Painting has been hired for restoring the shutters at the Franklinville School
- Repairing the waves in the two upstairs carpets is being investigated

Calendar of Events for 2025

- March 10 (Monday) 7 PM—R. Scott Bomboy, Lost Covered Bridges
- April 14 (Monday) 7 PM—Mike Jesberger, Battle of Germantown
- April 27 (Sunday) 1-3 PM—Open House, 1895 School

- May 12 (Monday)—Annual Meeting and Anthony Selletti, History of Lazaretto Quarantine
- May 18 (Sunday) 1-3 PM—Open House, Franklinville School
- June 9 (Monday) 6:30 PM—Pot-luck Picnic
- Sept 14, 2025 (Sunday) 1-4 PM --William Penn Inn, WVHS 50th Anniversary Celebration (Save the Date). Speaker, Michael Jesberger

We are a member-driven, all-volunteer, non-profit organization. Although receiving funds from occasional grants, WVHS depends on our generous donors. No amount is too small.

Please support us!

Many people like to include a gift to charity in their will or estate plan to support causes that are important in their life.

Please consider including a gift to WVHS to benefit the promotion and preservation of our local history for future generations.
