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*Wissahickon Valley Historical Society ~ Volume 4, Number 8*

# *The Valley Crier*



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*April 2025.....Celebrating our 50<sup>th</sup> Year*

**Michael Jesberger to speak at the April meeting:** Let's pack the room for our speaker on **Monday, April 14, at 7 PM, for a special presentation by Michael Jesberger on the Battle of Germantown.** Jesberger is an independent military historian who specializes in the American Revolution and Civil War time periods, known for his knowledge and passion. He describes himself as a reenactor, tour guide, and historical lecturer. He is a member of numerous history-based organizations and active in the reenactment community. A lifelong resident of the Philadelphia region, (presently Montgomery County), Jesberger is a native of Northeast Philadelphia. His topic is the events leading up to and including the Battle of Germantown. In September, at the WVHS 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration, Jesberger will continue his narrative, discussing the troops who moved up Skippack Road after the battle.

Following the American defeat at the Battle of Brandywine in September of 1777, the British occupied Philadelphia when British General Sir William Howe positioned two brigades in a small village outside

Philadelphia, called Germantown to protect the city. George Washington, commanding an army of 11,000, sensed an opportunity and decided to attack and destroy the enemy detachment at Germantown. As events unfolded, Washington's troops passed the site of the WVHS 1895 School six times!

**Official Notice—at the May meeting--WVHS Members will vote on**

**changes to the Bylaws:** At the start of the May 12 meeting at 7 PM, at the 1895 School (799 W. Skippack Pike, Blue Bell, PA), WVHS's 2024-2025 Paid Members will vote on five changes to its Bylaws. In all cases, the proposed changes clarify the present Bylaws and will not change the present workings of the society. A detailed list of the proposed changes and an explanation of each appears at the end of this *Valley Crier*.

**1895 School Open House to Celebrate WVHS and its 50 Years!**

**Sunday, April 27, 1-3 PM.** Have fun and learn more about our society's accomplishments. We are pulling out our scrapbooks and photographs for all to see.

**Ambler Historic Walking Tours Announced:** WVHS and its Ambler Storytellers have announced the dates for the spring tours of the Ambler Business District: *April 5, April 19, May 3, May 17, June 7, and June 21.* All tours (Saturdays) begin at the train station at 3 PM. To avoid no-shows, a \$15 registration is required, and all proceeds will be used for the

preservation of the Ambler Freight House. (Work there has halted temporarily so SEPTA can remediate for asbestos.) Tours in groups of twelve take about an hour and learn more about the history and architecture of a “must-see” small town. (See the next article.) Guests are sure to have fun and learn much! To register:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/ambler-downtown-walking-tour-spring-2025-tickets-1230870559979?aff=oddtcreator> .

The Storytellers meet on most Wednesdays at the Ambler Library at 6 PM. In addition to planning the tours, they are working on ways to preserve the history of Ambler, including a National Register of Historic Places nomination. WVHS members and history lovers are welcome! For details, please send an email to [amblerstorytellers@gmail.com](mailto:amblerstorytellers@gmail.com).

**Ambler Named the Top “Must-Visit Small Town” in the US:** “Thrillest,” a travel website, has named Ambler “the top must-see downtown in the nation.” It has “old brick buildings, pubs, boutiques, a dance company, a painting studio, and a playhouse that puts on spectacular live productions – Ambler has the quintessential small-town Main Street, only better” because it features street fairs and a farmers’ market. An online site, *Islands*, also describes the town, noting its shops, theatre, restaurants, and “striking architecture”: <https://www.islands.com/1809261/pennsylvania-underrated-small-town-number-one-hub-trendy-shops-food-fun-ambler/>. WVHS preserves a collection of Ambler memorabilia from 1988 when Ambler Borough celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

### **Campaign to Preserve Franklinville School Continues: Spring work**

has begun at the Franklinville School. This project is expensive! And WVHS needs your help! A first step is to repair any rotting wood. The frames around the windows are especially bad. The shutters in the back are so old, no one knows their age. Perhaps they date from the 1930s when the “projector” room was added in the rear? The shutters on one side date from 2006 and from the other side from 2011. In those days, members held bake sales to raise money, but food safety regulations have changed our ways. Please send your donations for this good cause! Make your check payable to "WVHS" and mail 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.

**Members Applaud Speaker on Covered Bridges:** At the March meeting, Scott Bomboy, an expert on local covered bridges, provided an astonishing number of facts and photos about these treasures. Providing maps of the region and their 36 sites in Montgomery County, he explained what happened to so many of them: they were lost due to politics, economics, or storms. (A flooded bridge, broken and being pushed downstream, crashes into the next bridge, and so forth.) Originally, covered bridges were owned by private companies who collected tolls; then the county took over to “free” them, but their upkeep became a burden. Today some covered bridges remain, thanks to the effort of preservation societies. An excerpt from Bomboy’s book, which summarizes many of his main points, is available at <https://preservingperkasie.com/2024/02/07/excerpt-the-lost-covered-bridges-of-montgomery-county/>.



***Scott Bomboy points to a photo of his wedding -- at a covered bridge!***



***After a court battle, Montgomery County Commissioners in 1956  
allowed the demolition of the Markley Mill Bridge***

**Spring and the Skippack Pike Toll Booth are Coming:** With the warmer weather, more work is planned to prepare the toll booth for its trek to Whitpain Township's Prophecy Creek Park. Stayed tuned to learn about the next steps.

**Professor Appreciates WVHS AMCHEM Collection:** In February, Dr. Laura J. Martin, Professor of Environmental Studies at Williams College (Williamstown, Massachusetts) and an "environmental historian," visited the 1895 School to look for a narrative about the origins of a particular herbicide (2,4-D). As she investigates what she calls the "history of science" (beyond what is described by U.S. Patents), she was pleased to find the WVHS AMCHEM collection. The WVHS archives contain several volumes of the former Ambler company's materials, including correspondence, photographs, publications, financial statements, and the like, dating from 1910 until 1986, all listed and preserved in acid-free protection. In addition, the museum displays, in its turret, *Weedone* (weed killer) posters and containers, employee award pins, and other memorabilia. Although consumers use caution with these products, they are essential; imagine visiting Valley Forge Park to find it covered with poison ivy. Read more about AmChem at the WVHS website, under "Local History."





***Dr. Laura Martin, examining AmChem to study the “history of science”***



***Nine acid-free boxes of AmChem records at the WVHS Library. The portrait above shows James Harvey Gravell (1880-1939), the founder and president of the American Chemical Paint Company, later AMCHEM.***

**Once a collector, always a collector:** As the WVHS Board of Directors discusses the window shutters at the Franklinville Schools, Marie Goldkamp, former president of the Historical Society of Whitpain, checked her basement and found a paint can from the last time the shutters were painted, some in 2006 and some in 2011. Today on the school's shutters we see Cottage Red as a trim color, also used as trim at the Normandy Farm Conference Center (once Normandy Farm, home of the biggest barn in the area). Appropriately, Benjamin Moore calls it "a classic barn red color." In the early 1900s, the owners of Normandy Farm, the Strassburgers, owned an estate in Normandy, France, where they saw white barns trimmed in dark red, so they brought the idea to our neighborhood.



***Cottage Red, the trim color at the Franklinville School***





*The "Cottage Red" door at the Franklinville School*



*Gate at Normandy Farm Conference Center, a rare view from inside, looking out onto Route 202, Dekalb Pike (June 2021)*

**Historic Tree Continues as Park Benches:** The Whitpain Township “State Champion Pignut Hickory “ fell during an infamous “derecho” storm in June 2020. The tree had lived along a stream at Wentz Run Park for 248 years! This type of tree is known for its hard wood, used at one time for broom sticks. According to Tom Farzetta, director of Whitpain Township’s

Department of Public Works, the township saved the precious wood, milling it and turning it into park benches, now located at the park. The first bench was part of an Eagle Scout project and the second one is dedicated to Kurt Baker, who served as the Parks and Recreation Department Director and recently retired. President Carol Kalos wrote about this tree in June 2021 in *The Blue Bell Stroll*, available on the WVHS website:

<https://www.wvalleyhs.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/The-Fall-of-Wentz-Run-Parks-Pignut-Hickory-Tree-June-2021.pdf>



***A photo from Wentz Park in January 2021 when Whitpain Township's arborist cleaned up the remains of the tree, counted its 248 rings, and decided it was a seedling in 1772. The PA Turnpike appears in the background.***



***Boards, later to become park benches, planed from Whippain's old Champion Tree and drying at Mermaid Park in September 2021***

**Historic Milestone Survives Tree Fall:** March 6 brought gusts of wind to bring down a lovely evergreen along Skippack Pike at St. John Lutheran Church. The tree narrowly missed hitting the Milestone marker there, which reads: "19 M to P" meaning 19 miles to Philadelphia. (One local resident relates how, as a child, she kept asking, "Mom, what is an EM-top?") There are eleven of these colonial-era markers in our area, used by the country's first postal carriers. An article about the mile markers, first published in *Stroll Blue Bell*, appears on the WVHS website:

<https://www.wvalleyhs.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/What-Are-Those-Old-Stone-Markers-Along-the-Road-April-2022.pdf>





***Colonial-era Mile Marker, located at St. John Lutheran Church, at 1802 Skippack Pike: “19 Miles to Philadelphia”***



***In this picture, can you find the woman with the chain saw? Happily the giant tree missed the historic marker on the right, facing Skippack Pike.***

**A Nearby Mile Marker:** Board member Barry Johnson spotted this colonial marker in Worcester Township. It is on north side of Germantown Pike between Trooper Road and Valley Forge Road.



***A Colonial Mile Marker in Worcester Township: "20 to P" (Philadelphia)***



**1895 School's Closet Gains New Shelf:** Whitpain Township carpenters recently added a high shelf to the closet where most of the WVHS Collection is stored. (Thank you, Whitpain Township!) When the school was new, it was the "cloak room." The work meant that the closet was emptied, so boxes filled the entire second-floor classroom. Then Joan Duxbury, Sally Zeller, and Barry Johnson re-checked labels, sorted boxes, and refilled the closet. A former HARC grant meant rearranging, so the entire project took weeks of perseverance, and our volunteers are always appreciated!



*The 1895 School's "Cloak Room," storage space for the WVHS Collection*



*The Collection's storage boxes, moved from the closet, fill the second-floor classroom*



***The finished closet, with hats on the new top shelf***

**Blue Bell Kids on TV, Learning History:** NBC News covered Blue Bell Elementary School, where students opened two time-capsules, one from 2000 and one from 1956. Construction at the site, adjacent to the 1895 School, brought them to the surface. The 1956 time-capsule was a surprise. The TV coverage of the students, sitting in the auditorium to witness the opening, appears on U Tube: <https://aroundambler.com/nbc10-covers-blue-bell-elementary-opening-two-time-capsules/> .



***Screen shot of the time capsule***

**Interested in Photography?** WVHS is considering sponsoring a **photography contest**, and we need a chair. Much of the planning has been completed, but we need an overseer. Email to [Info@WValleyHS.org](mailto:Info@WValleyHS.org)

**Access to Historical Records:** WVHS holds the personal and official stories of topics about immigrants, Natives, civil rights, women's rights, education, public health, and more. Our goal is to digitize our treasures to make primary sources available to the public. WVHS has received messages about how new federal policies will limit the public's access to historical records. One email offers advice; Advantage Archives, whose mission is to digitize the stories of those who witnessed history, states, "Libraries, archives, historians, and advocates must continue to defend open access to historical records and primary sources, invest in local digitization, and ensure that history remains available to all—without censorship, without restriction, without exceptions."

**Taxation without Representation:** This was a slogan during the American Revolution, but what if colonists became members of the British Parliament? *Smithsonian Magazine* (Sept/Oct 2023) explains that it "would not really have addressed colonial concerns." There were 550 men in Parliament, so colonists would have had a small voice. Also, the less wealthy (the colonists) were unimportant to Parliament members. "The chances of getting them to prioritize the well-being of middling farmers in Pennsylvania...would have been slim to none."

**Help Us Spread Our Local History News:** If you have friends, neighbors, or family who would like to receive the *Valley Crier*, please let us know and we will include them on our email list: [Info@WValleyHS.org](mailto:Info@WValleyHS.org)

**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](mailto:Info@WValleyHS.org).

**As a Nonprofit, WVHS is grateful for donations:** Please make your check payable to "WVHS" and mail 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 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](mailto:Info@WValleyHS.org).

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

## **From the Board of Directors' meeting in February:**

- Two high school juniors have contacted WVHS about volunteering at the 1895 School's museum.
- Ambler Storytellers' have obtained an Eventbrite account on behalf of WVHS.
- Three groups were identified to receive a personal invitation to tour the Franklinville School.

## **Calendar of Events for 2025**

- April 14 (Monday) 7 PM—Mike Jesberger, Battle of Germantown
- April 27 (Sunday) 1-3 PM—Open House, 1895 School
- May 12 (Monday)—Member 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 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration (Save the Date). Speaker, Michael Jesberger

### ***Notification of a vote to amend the WVHS Bylaws:***

***At the meeting on May 12, 2025 (7 PM at the 1895 School, 799 West Skippack Pike, Blue Bell, PA), Dues-paying Members of the Wissahickon Valley Historical Society (2024-2025) will vote on proposed changes to its Bylaws.***

***In the following list are five proposed changes. For each proposed change, there are three sections: first, the original wording; second, the proposed wording (showing changes in bold font); and third, the rationale for the change in italics. The proposals would not change WVHS procedures. Each proposed change to the Bylaws is a clarification of the wording.***

***If it is convenient for you, please bring these proposals to the meeting to aid discussion.***

**Item 1.**

**AMENDED AND RESTATED BYLAWS OF  
THE WISSAHICKON VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

These Amended and Restated Bylaws of The Wissahickon Valley Historical Society, shall be effective as of October 11, 2021, and shall supersede all prior Bylaws of the Society. Capitalized terms used in these Bylaws shall have the meanings set forth in the Definitions section set forth below...

**PROPOSED---AMENDED AND RESTATED BYLAWS OF  
THE WISSAHICKON VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY [ADD: May 12, 2022]**

These Amended and Restated Bylaws of The Wissahickon Valley Historical Society, shall be effective as of **[DELETE: October 11, 2021], [ADD: the date listed above]** and shall supersede all prior Bylaws of the Society. Capitalized terms used in these Bylaws shall have the meanings set forth in the Definitions section set forth below:

*This change indicates the year that the Bylaws go into effect will be removed from the body of the text and added to the title, which appears at the top of the page. Changing the text of the Bylaws requires a vote of the Membership, but a simpler process is to list the date with the heading at the top of the page.*

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**Item 2.**

**Present and Voting** shall mean for a Member Meeting or a Board Meeting, either that the person is physically present or has given a proxy to a person who is physically present. And for a Board Meeting, a Board Member may attend by electronic means so long as such person can hear the deliberations and can be heard by the Board Members who are physically present.

**PROPOSED: Present and Voting** shall mean for a Member Meeting or a Board Meeting, either that the person is physically present or has given a proxy to a person who is physically present. And for a Board Meeting, a Board Member may attend by electronic means so long as such person can hear the deliberations and can be heard by the Board Members who are physically present. **[ADD: An abstention is not a “vote,” but the member abstaining counts to establish a quorum.]**

*This change clarifies that in Parliamentary Procedure, as presented in “Roberts Rules of Order,” an abstention is not a vote. “Present and voting” indicates that, although an*



abstention is not a "vote," the person choosing to abstain is counted to establish a quorum.

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Item 3.

**ARTICLE 2  
OFFICERS OF THE SOCIETY**

**Section 2.1 Elected Officers and Terms.** Commencing with the adoption of these Bylaws, the Elected Officers of the Society are as follows:

<u>Office</u>	<u>Name:</u>
President	Carol Kalos
Vice President	Joseph Langella
Secretary	Marie Goldkamp
Treasurer	Thomas Goldkamp

The terms of the current Elected Officers shall all expire on August 31, 2022, and a slate of new officers shall be elected on a biennial basis, starting in May 2022 for two-year terms commencing on September 1, 2022. (See the Definition, "Biennial Membership Meeting.")

**PROPOSED: ARTICLE 2  
OFFICERS OF THE SOCIETY**

**Section 2.1 Elected Officers and Terms.** Commencing with the adoption of these Bylaws, the Elected Officers of the Society are as follows: **[ADD: President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer.] DELETE the following list:**

<u>Office</u>	<u>Name:</u>
President	Carol Kalos
Vice President	Joseph Langella
Secretary	Marie Goldkamp
Treasurer	Thomas Goldkamp

The terms of the current Elected Officers shall all expire on **[DELETE: August 31, 2022,] [ADD: August 31 of even- numbered years]** and a slate of new officers shall be elected on a biennial basis, starting in May **[DELETE: 2022] [ADD: of even-numbered years]** for two-year terms commencing on September 1, **[DELETE: 2022] [ADD: of even-numbered years]**. (See the Definition, "Biennial Membership Meeting.")

*This change eliminates the list of officers' actual names from the Bylaws. The titles of the officers will continue to be listed. Also, specific dates in 2022 will be changed to the phrase, "even-numbered years" to avoid revising the Bylaws every two years. The*

officers were elected in May 2024 to serve from September 1, 2024, until August 31, 2026.

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**Item 4.**

**ARTICLE 5  
THE OFFICERS' DUTIES**

**Section 5.1 Duties of Elected Officers.** The duties of the Elected Officers shall be as follows:

- a) The President shall preside at all Board and Membership Meetings, shall appoint members of such Committees as the Board may create, and shall set the agenda for Board Meetings and Membership Meetings not less than three (3) days before any such meeting shall occur. The President shall be a member of all such Committees, shall represent the Society to the public and shall perform such other duties as may be appropriate for the president of a Pennsylvania non-profit corporation.

**PROPOSED: ARTICLE 5  
THE OFFICERS' DUTIES**

**Section 5.1 Duties of Elected Officers.** The duties of the Elected Officers shall be as follows:

- a) The President shall preside at all Board and Membership Meetings, shall appoint members of such Committees as the Board may create, and shall **[DELETE: set] [ADD: distribute electronically or by U.S. Mail]** the agenda for Board Meetings and Membership Meetings not less than three (3) days before any such meeting shall occur. The President shall be a member of all such Committees, shall represent the Society to the public and shall perform such other duties as may be appropriate for the president of a Pennsylvania non-profit corporation.

*This change clarifies that the meeting agenda must be distributed, not simply created. The President should distribute the agenda by U.S. Mail to accommodate Paid Members who have no email address to announce Board Meetings and Membership Meetings.*

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**Item 5.**

**Section 5.1 Duties of Elected Officers.** The duties of the Elected Officers shall be as follows:

- c) The Treasurer shall maintain the funds and securities of the Society and shall deposit all monies and securities in such depositories designated by the Board; shall disburse funds of the Society for the payment of the Society's Expenditures as approved by the Board; shall render to the President and the Board, whenever requested, an account of all transactions made as Treasurer, and shall prepare an annual report and shall file annual tax returns to the Internal Revenue Service. The President and the Treasurer shall jointly monitor the Society's Investments.

**PROPOSED: Section 5.1 Duties of Elected Officers.** The duties of the Elected Officers shall be as follows:

The Treasurer shall maintain the funds and securities of the Society and shall deposit all monies and securities in such depositories designated by the Board; shall disburse funds of the Society for the payment of the Society's Expenditures as approved by the Board; shall render to the President and the Board, whenever requested, an account of all transactions made as Treasurer, and shall prepare an annual report and shall file annual tax returns to the Internal Revenue Service. **[ADD: and prepare and file the required annual forms to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania]**. The President and the Treasurer shall jointly monitor the Society's Investments.

*This change refers to a new Annual Report established by Pennsylvania' Department of State that WVHS must file. It is required of all businesses and nonprofit corporations.*

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***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.***

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