



Special April Meeting Date and Time  
April 17 - 1 to 4 p.m.  
Open House  
Program at 1:30  
Lindenwold Estate and Dr. Mattison  
by Russ Bellavance

We will celebrate the installation of the  
refurbished stained glass panel from Lindenwold Castle -  
sponsored by the SpringHouse Questers -  
and the placing of the  
National Register of Historic Places plaque.

\*\*\*\*\*

We plan on punch and cookies for the open house.  
Cookie donations are welcome. Guests are, of course,  
welcome too.

The open house serves as our April meeting. In May  
we will hold a joint meeting with the Historical Society of  
Whitpain and hear about their programs and plans. Our  
end of year pot-luck meeting will again be held at the  
**Gloria and Bob Myers'** in Fort Washington.

# History of the Wissahickon Valley Public Library

The March program, presented by library director **Anne Frank**, was a real eye opener for those attending. Anne shared the recent history of the library and what services are now being offered as well as future plans. Many services are now on line, and many materials can be accessed from home. These include books, references, and periodicals. The library also offers many programs including current movies, book groups, discussion groups, and young adult and children's services. We are one of many groups that uses the library's community room. Check out the library's web-site. Both the Ambler and Blue Bell libraries are open daily.

Members **Jean and Russ Bellavance, Josephine Sawicki, and Pat Ritter** shared their memories of the struggle in the 1980's and 1990's to keep the local library in operation and the success in finding a permanent home for the Blue Bell library while keeping the Ambler branch open.

It was a long road with many branches and turns over almost 200 years to reach our current library system. The first libraries in the area were membership libraries - one in Pigeontown (now Blue Bell) and one in the Upper Dublin area.

The Whitpain Library Company was established in 1817 with 35 charter members. The collection was housed in the second floor of the general store and post office at Broad Ax for 84 years. By 1884 they reported having 2000 volumes and being open on Saturday afternoons.

The Union Library of Upper Dublin was established in 1834 in the Three Tuns area. It was moved to Ambler as a project of Mrs Keasbey and the WCTU. The library had its ups and downs and was housed in several sites, but it became the Ambler Public Library when The Colony Club of Ambler gave it a home and support in 1923.

In the 1950's the Upper Dublin School District was formed. At the same time Whitpain including Broad Ax Village and Spring House were served by a bookmobile from Norristown.

In 1959 the Trustees of the Ambler Library formed a Long Range Planning Committee. By 1961 they had obtained the lots of Race Street and built the current Ambler Library.

In 1966 the Women's Club of Whitpain and the Montgomery County/Norristown Public Library met. The result was the Whitpain Library which was set up in rent free quarters at 202 and 73 (Center Square). Whitpain Township contributed \$2500.

In 1968, the Wissahickon School District (formed in 1965) Board agreed to support the library if Whitpain and Ambler worked together. The School Board offered the 2nd floor of the 1895 Schoolhouse for the library. In 1969, the school board proposed dropping financial aid to the library, but they faced public outcry and reversed the proposal.

By 1979 the library had 10,000 volumes and expanded to both floors of the 1895 Schoolhouse. In 1981 they moved to 2 classrooms at Shady Grove Elementary. In 1987 they moved back to the Center Square site.

After an unsuccessful drive to construct a library near the high school and middle school, the roller rink site on Skippack Pike came on the market in 1990's. It has proved an excellent site with parking and large, flexible spaces. Anne Frank said the only problem has been that people miss the current sign.

The Ambler Library serves the borough and shares staff with the Blue Bell Library.

Thanks to all those who persisted in their defense and support of our library system. We are lucky to have such a great resource.



## Blue Bell/Lower Gwynedd Students Study Local History

Fifth grade enrichment students from both Blue Bell Elementary (see left) and Lower Gwynedd Elementary recently interviews Historical Society members as part of a local history project. Working with Liz Gavrys from Hope Lodge, students of Lauren Miller and Kelli Barlow are making a DVD of local history. They are focusing on myths, stories, and legends connected with Hope Lodge, the Highlands, the 1895 Schoolhouse, Dawesfield, and the Foulke house (where Sally Wister spent 18 months during the Revolutionary War). Thanks to **Bob Whittock, Peggy Diorio, and Peg Johnston** for sharing their time and expertise with the students.



Third grade students from Blue Bell will be walking over to the schoolhouse later this spring. They will experience a typical lesson of the 1890's and visit the second floor museum.

## Recent Donations

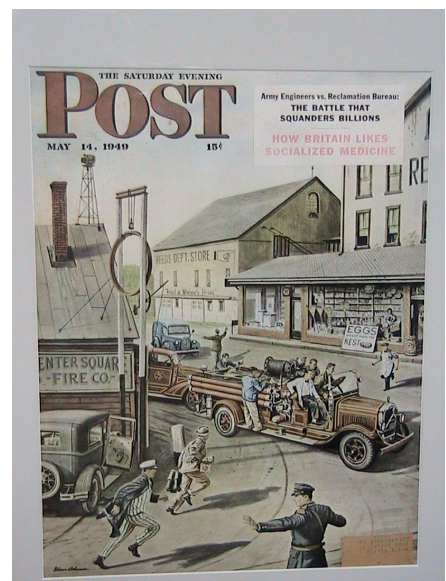
- \* Dial phone from 1980's - by **Bob Whittock** - from Mike Snowden
- \* Sports patch from Whitpain from Edward Simon
- \* Print of Saturday Evening Post - featured Center Square - from **Ginny Sinns** - (See below)
- \* History of the Wissahickon Valley Public Library - by Dr. Charles T. Christine

## Saturday Evening Post Cover Featured Center Square

A recent donation from **Ginny Sinns** re-inspired interest in the May 14, 1949 Saturday Evening Post cover which featured the corner of Skippack Pike and 202.

Artist Stevan Dohanos "caught" pajama-clad John Henryson and Phil G. Byrd, III rushing for the truck. Chief of Whitpain Township Police Department Louis Rossiter directs traffic. Charles Murphy has climbed aboard as have John Berkheimer, Jr. and George Greere. Berhheimer shares driver's seat with driver Charles Kershner. Peter Emil rides the right side. Approaching from the other side is William Reed, proprietor-owner of the Reed's Department Store (now Reed's Furniture Store). Watching from the store are Mrs. John Henryson and J. Allen Henryson. George Methlie halts a panel van below the entrance to the fire company. The old locomotive wheel rim alarm and modern siren were added to the scene by Dohanos.

Thanks to **Bob Whittock** for the above information.



## Building News

The shed roof repairs are completed and withstood the recent rains. Thanks to **Neal Bradley and Bob Whittock**.

The Society now has a copier/scanner which will be used by curator/librarians as well as researchers. In recent months we have had researchers on the Strassburger family, the architect Milton Bean, the Evans family properties, and Sally Wister. If anyone has a spare laptop, we could use it to start the digital data base of our collection.



## Mark Your Calendar

April 17 - Open House at the Schoolhouse - 1 -4 p.m.

Open House at Evans-Mumbower Mill 1 -4 p.m.

April 25 - Board Meeting - 7:30 p.m.

May 9 - Joint Meeting with Historical Society of Whitpain

Manor College is sponsoring a Civil War series of lectures and events this summer. Check their web site for details. [www.manor.edu](http://www.manor.edu)



Wissahickon Valley Historical Society  
799 Skippack Pike  
Ambler, PA 19002