



Wissahickon Valley

historical society

Ambler
Lower Gwynedd
Whitpain

Join us Monday,
April 12
at the 1895
Schoolhouse
at 7:30 p.m.
Program by
Frank Ruzzo, Jr.



Our former President **Frank Ruzzo, Jr.** will present a talk entitled "The Homer Laughlin China Company," the history of the world's largest pottery company. The

presentation will highlight the company's products from its inception in 1877 until today. Some of the highlights will be the story of Fiesta, a depression era design which has endured from 1936 to 2010.



Frank will use his personal collection to illustrate some of the company's most important lines including Laughlin Art China, White Ironstone, Yellowware, and the color lines including Fiesta, Harlequin, Riviera, Wells Art, Tango and Rhythm.

The company, located in Newell, West Virginia, continues to operate today producing restaurant lines and Fiesta for modern tabletops, Join us for "China Night" at the Wissahickon Valley Historical Society.

Greet friends and check out new displays at the Schoolhouse - including our rehabilitated stained glass window. The meeting will begin promptly at 7:30 p.m.

NOTE - Beginning with the third Sunday in May, the Historic Society of Whitpain will host an open house at the Franklinville School from 1 to 4 p.m. each month. Our Schoolhouse will be open on the same days. We're working together!

Wissahickon Valley Historical Society
Serving Ambler, Lower Gwynedd, Whitpain Communities
Volume 11, Issue 6 - April 2010

Volunteers Needed

Preparing for the May 14 Open House Celebration

On May 14 the Society will host an open House at the 1895 Schoolhouse to celebrate the building's designation to the National Registry of Historic Buildings. The new roof, chimney, and paint have the outside of the building looking great. Now the inside needs a good cleaning. If everyone takes a small part of the work, the building will be ready for the



14th. Most jobs will take an hour or so - and can be completed on a Thursday morning or at a time to be arranged - perhaps a Saturday morning work party.



Jobs available: vacuuming floors (we do have a new vacuum), cleaning woodwork, dusting furniture and bookcases, cleaning display cases, washing windows, cleaning kitchen, cleaning lavatory, and tidying lawn and porch.

Note: I have always heard stories of the work parties of the early days of the Society. Call another Society member and make plans to join the fun!

WWII "Traveling" Exhibit

An exhibit of artifacts from our collection relating to WWII spent the month of March at the Blue Bell Library and is now located in the second floor museum at the 1895 Schoolhouse. The exhibit was assembled by **Emmy Simon, Jeffrey Hahn, and Peg Johnston** using items donated and loaned by **Joe Schneider, Emmy Simon, Art Driedger, Jeffrey Hahn, and the Dettweiler family.**

The exhibit includes several letters home from soldiers stationed in Europe as well as political cartoons of the era as well as items from the front and home front.

Our second floor museum also features exhibits about Lower Gwynedd, Ambler, and Whitpain as well as items from home and work life of the past. Please visit on a meeting evening, Thursday morning, or during a Sunday open house.

Oak Lane Day School/Cadwalader Estate

Rich History - Future Uncertain

The historic Oak Lane Day School announced last fall that it would close at the end of the 2009-2010 school year. Its property at 137 Stenton was sold and its future is uncertain. The school and property have interesting histories.

The school was established in Cheltenham in 1916 by a group of parents and educators who supported the Progressive Education movement. The movement was a reaction to the Industrial Revolution which was asking schools to prepare workers for industry rather than with a liberal arts education. Originally a coed school for kindergarten through high school, it was first affiliated with the University of Pennsylvania. In the 1930's it was acquired by Temple University as part of their teacher training program. There was always a strong emphasis on art, music, and drama.

In 1960 the school incorporated as an independent school, and in the 1980's it narrowed its focus to the elementary level.

As an independent school, it moved its campus to the former **Cadwalader** estate at the corner of Butler Pike and Stenton Avenue. The estate had been in the Cadwalader family since colonial times and includes a stream, pond, and several specimen trees as well as farm buildings. The school used the original estate building as well as adding a classroom building and a gymnasium.

The land was sold last fall to an affiliate of Hansen Properties. The Whitpain Board of Supervisors recently revised the township's zoning map to change the site from "Institutional" to "R-5 Agricultural/Rural Residential District". That, with a deed restriction of limiting development to 1 building per 2 acres, could potentially allow the construction of 15 houses on the site.

Items for our annual Market Day are always welcome. They can be delivered any Thursday morning or by arrangement.

Check out the Society's web-site. Additional news and updates are available at www.wvalleyhs.org.

We were sorry to read of the death of **Shirley Swaab**, who presented several programs for the Society over the years. We remember well her programs about mourning clothing and about tattoos. She was well known in the Philadelphia antiques community and was a friend of several Society members.



Wissahickon Valley Historical Society
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www.wvalleyhs.org

Mark your calendar:

- April 12 - Monthly meeting - 1895 Schoolhouse - 7:30 p.m. - see page 1
April 18 - Open House - consider bringing a friend - 1 to 4 p.m.
April 26 - Board meeting - 7:30 p.m.
May 10 - Monthly meeting - Antique car collecting - 1895 Schoolhouse -
7:30 p.m. - If you know someone who has an antique car and
would like to bring it, please invite him/her.
May 16 - Open House to Celebrate WVHS's 35th Anniversary and listing of the
1895 Schoolhouse on the National Register of Historic Places - 1:30 to 4
Reminder - The Schoolhouse is open each Thursday morning - 10 to 1.

News Briefs:

Recent donations: **Art Driedger** has donated materials that he used in teaching local history classes at Wissahickon High School. Watch for future articles based on some of these materials. **Bud and Mary Jane Wahl** donated copies of CDs **Wissahickon Valley Past, Present, and Future** and **Ambler: From the People's Point of View**, both the results of cooperation between Ambler's Savings Bank and the Wissahickon School District.

Hope Lodge and Graeme Park - Check their web-sites for ways to support these local treasures.

