

Volume 13, Issue 1, August/September 2011

September 12th Meeting 7:30 at the Schoolhouse

Program: AmChem - a major Ambler employer from
the 1930s to the 1970s.

AmChem produced agricultural and metallurgical chemicals at their industrial site along the SEPTA railroad line. The company's founder, James Harvey Gravell, moved his company to Ambler from Philadelphia in the 1920s. He started programs for employee profit sharing and one year in the 1930s, paid the debts of all of his employees. Gravell was also a major benefactor of Weidner University. Gary Fuess will share AmChem history and present company records and artifacts to our collection. Refreshments and social time follow the meeting.

Market Day

October 15 at the Schoolhouse - 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Items are currently begin collected, sorted, and priced at
the Schoolhouse.

Baked goods requested for sale on the 15th.

Volunteers needed before and on day of sale. Lots of
varied opportunities to help.

A couple of hours from each member will make easy work
for all. This is our main fund raiser of the year.

Call Josephine at 610-277-8968 for detail

Hope Lodge Encampment/Re-enactment

For the 30th year, Hope Lodge will be the site of Whitemarsh Encampment Re-enactment on November 5 and 6. This is their biggest special public event of the year and without state support, the organizing committee is looking for volunteers. Please consider volunteering for pre-event work or event duties. Information: Diane Horan, 215-542-1275 or dkhoran2002@aol.com.

This is great family event - if you can't volunteer, consider attending.

More Info On Wooden Sewing Box

The oak puzzle box donated by Audrey and Jeff Hahn contains sewing machine attachments for a Singer sewing machine. According to several on-line sources, it was produced in 14 different editions in the late 19th century and early 20th century. It contains attachments for "hemming, braiding, unbraiding, tucking, shirring, binding, ruffling, and quilting as well as screws, screwdrivers, bobbins, and needles". It was designed by John M. Griest, a Singer employee. He applied for a patent in August 6, 1888, and patent number 397,980 was granted on February 19, 1889.



Current patent numbers are at more than 7,500,000, and patents take several years to receive approval.

Membership Time

Watch for membership renewal notices coming in the mail soon. Please consider giving a gift membership to a friend/neighbor. Members receive the newsletter and invitations to special events as well as the satisfaction of supporting the group's mission. There is a special gift rate of \$10.

Librarian and Secretary Needed

The society needs a librarian to organize and catalogue our collection of books, maps, etc. A recording secretary is needed to attend board meetings which are held the fourth Monday of each month and last one hour. Call Russ Bellavance.

Whitpain's 9/11 Memorial to be Dedicated

On Sunday, September 11 at 1 p.m. the newly constructed 9/11 Memorial outside the Whitpain Township Building will be dedicated. The Memorial features I-beams from the World Trade Center.

A Peek at our Quilt Collection

This summer quilt expert Sally Malley spent a morning at the Schoolhouse looking at our quilt collection. We are custodians of five large quilts and several small quilts. Several are album quilts - with names and dates of the makers as part of the pattern. All of the album quilts have local connections - three from the Conard family and one with Whitpain and Chester connections. We also have a small crazy quilt and a large applique quilt. Sally helped us date all the quilts - looking at materials used as well as names and dates on squares. She also gave us advice for the quilts' care and maintenance. We are writing a grant proposal to carry out her suggestions. Sally also agreed to present a program about quilts later in the year. Thanks, Sally.



Conard Family Reunion

In June, Jean Bellavance and Peg Johnston attended the Conard family reunion at the Horsham Meeting House. They shared with family members the three Conard family quilts, the Conard auger, and a Civil War bullet - all of which are part of the society's collection. Dot and Henry Conard were founding members of the WVHS. The Conard family were early settlers in Blue Bell. The Cloot, at the corner of Stenton Ave. and Pennlyn/BlueBell Pike, has been in the Conard family for generations. Our library is named for Henry Conard.

At the reunion, Conard family stories were shared - including one about cousins (now in their 90s) who used to play baseball against each other. Selection on the harmonica by 90 year old Sam Walker was another treat. The photo shows Marty Searight, Conard family member, with the Conard family artifacts from our collection.



Penn Museum Sponsors "Great Riddle" series

The University of Pennsylvania Museum is sponsoring a series of lectures focusing on Great Riddles in Archaeology - starting with King Arthur, Camelot, and the Quest for a Holy Grail on October 3. Check their web-site www.penn.museum for details.

From the President's Desk - Russ Bellavance

Our 2011-2012 year is about to get under way. We still working on the program schedule. Look for it soon on our website (<http://www.wvalleyhs.org>). It should be another good year!

Market Day will be Saturday, October 15. We still need items for our White Elephant tables. If you have some treasures you no longer need, you can bring them to the September meeting, drop them off on Thursday mornings (the Schoolhouse will not be open on Thursday, Sept. 1), or contact one of the officers to schedule a drop-off. we also need items for the Bake Sale table. We usually do quite well with your delicious baked goods - so keep them coming! That's usually the one time of year that I bake, and if I can successfully bake, anyone can. We will, of course, also need volunteers on Market Day itself.

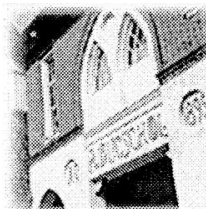
We also need docents for our third Sunday of the month open houses. They are from 1 to 4 p.m. It's fun and easy, and we normally have several visitors - even in bad weather. Please consider signing up for one the Sundays this coming year. (You can be matched up with an experienced docent if it is your first time, and we have guide books.)

As you have seen and read, many historical societies and historic sites are suffering financially from the combination of the "Great Recession" (I doubt that history will eventually call it that) and very tight state and local budgets. We have always run a very lean operation, relying on the great work of volunteers. We (particularly our Treasurer, John Simon) have a done a good job lately of finding additional savings. If only our politicians were so frugal!

I hope to welcome you back at the September meeting. Don't worry - there will be sign-up sheets as well as refreshments.

Historical Society of Whitpain Meeting

The Historical Society of Whitpain holds its first meeting of the year on Tuesday, August 30 at 7:15 at the Blue Bell Library. The program is about Doylestown's Pre-WWII Mobilization.



Wissahickon Valley Historical Society
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