



A Note from the President:

♥ Greetings ♥

February is a month of important holidays and events; so here goes ... **Happy Valentine's Day, President's Day, Black History Month, George Washington's Birthday, and, Lincoln's Birthday.**

We hope to see all of our members and friends at our meeting on Monday, February 12. **Herbert Russ** will speak on the *History of Zion Baptist Church*. The church is located on North Street in Ambler, PA, and is one of the oldest congregations founded by African-Americans in Ambler. This should be a fascinating program. Please

plan on attending to hear about their long history in our community.

I recently was invited to attend a taping of "In the Actor's Studio with James Lipton" for Bravo on cable television. Imagine my surprise when the guest being interviewed turned out to be **Diana Ross**. I made the trip to New York City for the seven-hour taping. It was truly an experience that I will never forget. The show will air February 18th on Bravo. Look for me incognito in dark glasses ... (If you want to know why; you have to come to the February meeting.)

See you there!

Frank J. Russo, Jr.
President

February General Membership Meeting

**Monday,
February 12, 2007
at 7:30pm**

At the
Historic 1895
Schoolhouse



HEADLINE NEWS: It's Official...

We're On the National Register of Historic Places!

As of December 20, 2006, the **1895 Whitpain High School** has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Thanks to the hard work of all our members, especially John Simon's persistence, we are on the road to making sure our historic headquarters is preserved for future centuries.

<http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/listings/20061229.HTM>

Black History Month Feature...

MADAM C.J. WALKER

Born **Sarah Breedlove** on December 23, 1867, on a Delta plantation in Louisiana. The daughter of former slaves she transformed from a farm laborer and laundress into one of the twentieth century's most successful women entrepreneurs.



After suffering from a scalp ailment in the 1890's, she experimented with homemade remedies. She developed her own scalp-conditioning product, Madam Walker's Wonderful Hair Grower, and founded her own business, the Madam C.J. Walker Manufacturing Company, selling hair care products and cosmetics. She traveled widely to promote her products. In 1910, she built a factory in Indianapolis; she opened a hair and manicure salon and a training school for black women.

In 1916, she moved to New York but continued overseeing her business operations. By 1917, it was the largest business in the United States owned by an African American. The Guinness Book of Records cites Walker as the first female American self-made millionaire.

Walker had a mansion called "**Villa Lewaro**" built in the tiny New York suburb of Irvington on Hudson, New York, and spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on furnishings. The Georgian-style building—in red brick with a bow front was designed by architect Vertner Tandy in 1915, and demolished by the city in 1941.

She became active in Harlem Community and sought to right injustices in the Black Community. Walker was also known for her philanthropy, supporting educational and social institutions including the NAACP, the Tuskegee Institute and Bethune-Cookman College

She is truly one American woman of achievement.

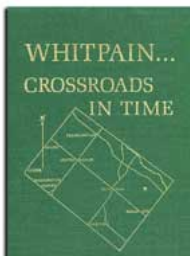
A Special Thanks...

TO OUR GENEROUS MEMBERS!

We'd like to extend a warm thank you to members who have contributed over (and beyond) during our annual membership renewal drive. These giving people include: **Mark Ashton, Lei Barry & Tad Mahan, Russ & Jean Bellavance, The Croke Family, Jim & Peg Johnston, Peg Krengel, Herb & Floss Levy, The McFarland Family, Bernie & Joanne Olszewski, Frank J. Russo, Jr., Emmy Simon, Greg Smith, and William & Bette Young. THANK YOU!**

Montgomery County Cemetery Project

This project is to help others, who have a research interest in this area, find the records they are looking for without having to go on a wild goose chase or have to wait for the church to mail the information that someone else probably already has. Please send us your contribution -- you don't need to have a complete list of the cemetery, but every little bit helps!! All we ask is if you get any information (surnames, names and dates, tombstone transcriptions, etc.) on any of the cemeteries. (The cemetery list will be posted on the announcement board at the 1895 Schoolhouse.) Please send all information to TMyers8644@aol.com for posting (please subject the email "Cemetery Posting").



Whitpain ... Crossroads in Time

Book for sale, in good condition – A "must have" for local residents. If interested, please contact **Ginny Sinn** at 215-646-0817 for additional information.

WISSAHICKON VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SERVING AMBLER • LOWER GWYNEDD • WHITPAIN COMMUNITIES

Unusual Facts About George Washington

Shown right: The Lansdowne portrait of President Washington by Gilbert Stuart.

Most people know that George Washington is usually considered the Father of our country, Our First President, and the Leader of the Continental Forces during the American Revolution.

There are some things that many do not know and these facts point out that he was an unusual man.

Washington led a charmed life; several times the enemy took direct aim at him and missed their mark. Washington's actions, many believe, led to the start of the French and Indian War. Since this war was fought all over the world, many consider this the First World War.

With the exception of driving the British out of Boston, his remarkable victories at Trenton and Princeton, he lost most battles, but his retreats and his persistence eventually led to victory.

After the surrender of the British at Yorktown and while peace negotiations were going on, the Army was stationed at Newburgh, New York. Here, Alexander Hamilton revealed that since many officers had not been paid for years, many of them were planning not to go home but march on the Continental Congress to satisfy their grievances and get their pay. He also revealed that Washington was getting unpopular with them since he disliked every unlawful proceeding.

A meeting was called in a new building, The Temple, for March 11, 1783, which was to draw up a final remonstrance to the Congress. Washington forbids the meeting but called for another on March 13.

Many had urged warnings about those who would counsel moderation. At this meeting, on a dark cloudy Sunday afternoon, Washington appealed to the officers of their loyalty and deplored the hint of mutiny.

He got nowhere and thought of a letter he had received from a member of the Congress, Joseph Jones of Virginia, explaining the financial problems of the Congress. As he got out the letter, he found he could not read because of the bad light. He took out a new pair of glasses – that few had seen him wear – and remarked, "Gentlemen, excuse me for putting these on, for not only have I grown gray in your service, but blind also ..."

There was a hush as Washington read the letter; few heard it. There were lumps in the throats of many and a few tears in some eyes.

When he finished, he departed. General Henry Knox moved to give Washington a vote of thanks and this was passed, as well as a resolution expressing confidence of the officers in the justice of Congress.

Jefferson considered this meeting one of the most important in the history of the United States.

In the spring of 1782, Washington received a letter from a Colonel Lewis Nicola, head of the Invalid Regiment at West Point, urging him to be the king of the United States. After all, he was very popular and all other nations had kings. Washington became quite indignant and replied that he 'viewed it with abhorrence and reprehend it with severity.'

After the British evacuated New York, Washington bade his officers farewell at Fraunces Tavern in a very emotional scene in which all these hard-bitten men wept in silence as they clasped one another. They never expected to see him again.

On his way through New Jersey, Philadelphia, Wilmington, and Baltimore, thousands greeted him on his way to Annapolis and here he surrendered his commission to bring the war to a successful conclusion.

Benjamin West, an American Artist, painting the portrait of King George III, was asked, "What do you think Washington will do now?" West replied, "Go back to his farm." George III remarked, "If he does not become king of the United States, he will be known as the greatest man that ever lived."

In 1797, when Washington stepped down from his second term as President of the United States, many predicted that blood would flow in the streets of Philadelphia. They could not imagine a popular man giving up the keys or the seal of the country to another because of an election. By refusing to pursue a third term, he made it the enduring norm that no U.S. President should seek more than two.

Washington died on December 14, 1799 at the age of 67. The news reached England in February 1800 and at that time the British Fleet was in north England where their commander ordered all flags to be at half-mast.

Washington believed in honesty, the civil over the military authority, and the rules and life of a gentleman.

— Submitted by Arthur R. Driedger





Wissahickon Valley Historical Society Calendar of Events ~ February 2007 and upcoming events!

- Mon., Feb. 12 **General Business Meeting**..... **7:30 PM**
“History of Zion Baptist Church, Ambler” – Herbert Russ, speaker
- Mon., Feb. 26 *Board Meeting* 7:00 PM
- Mon., March 12 **General Business Meeting**..... **7:30 PM**
“Clara Barton Impersonation” – Ms. Waskie, speaker
- Mon., March 26 *Board Meeting* 7:00 PM
- Mon., April 9 **General Business Meeting**..... **7:30 PM**
“History of Firefighting in Whitpain Township” – Speaker to be announced

*The Wissahickon Valley Historical Society Newsletter is published once a month during the membership season.
General Membership Meetings are held the 2nd Monday of each month, and are open to the public.*

Wissahickon Valley Historical Society • 799 Skippack Pike, Blue Bell, PA 19422 • 215.646.6541



Wissahickon Valley Historical Society
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February 2007 Newsletter

Our Meeting:

“The History of the Zion Baptist Church”