



**A Note from
the President:**

Spring Has Sprung!

A Happy Mother's Day wish goes out to all our membership who hold the entitled role of mother. It looks as though spring is finally showing its face; I must say that I am pleased to see it. Things were a little scary with the weather recently – a little April snow showers will hopefully bring May flowers!

I hope everyone will mark your calendar for Monday, May 14th at 7:30 PM for our last program meeting of the 2006-2007 season. The speaker will be **Susan Taylor** who will present a program entitled "**The History of the Delaware Canal**". We look forward to hearing Susan's talk.

It is my understanding that the April meeting went without a hitch in my

absence. See I knew you could do it! I missed everyone and look forward to our reunion on May 14th.

Our last meeting for the season will be on **Monday, June 11th at 5:30 PM**, site to be announced. This will be our **Annual Family Picnic**. We hope for a large attendance and lots of good food. We once again ask that you bring a covered dish and a wrapped "gift" for our "Bean Auction". Gifts can range from "valued" to gag gifts, all items are wrapped so you will not know what you are bidding on. Have some fun with it and you never know what treasure you can buy for beans!

I look forward to seeing you.

*Sincerely,
Frank J. Russo, Jr.
President*

**May
General
Membership
Meeting**

**Monday,
May 14, 2007
at 7:30pm**

At the Historic 1895
Schoolhouse

*This Month's
Hospitality:
Russ and Jean
Bellavance*

*Pick up the **Ambler Gazette** – April 25, 2007 issue for a fantastic story on page 13 (the People section) ... **WVHS** gets a helping hand from the **Center Square Fire Company!***

Committees to Meet Before Summer Break

The 1895 Schoolhouse Committee, The 2007-2008 Program Committee and the Market Day 2007 Committee will be called to a meeting sometime in May or early June. The purpose is to begin planning for the coming season, which begins in September. If you have signed-up to be a part of these committees, please try to attend these important meetings.



This Month's Meeting Lecture: The History of the Delaware Canal

The Delaware Canal stretches from Bristol to Easton along the Delaware River. It was used to haul coal and other products from the Lehigh Canal beginning in Mauch Chunk (today Jim Thorpe) to the industrial centers of the Philadelphia area near Bristol, Pennsylvania. The canal was built in the mid-1800s and ran its last commercial traffic on October 17, 1931. The state bought 40 miles (64.37 km) of the canal in 1931 and bought the remaining 20 miles (32.19 km) in 1940.

The Delaware Division of the Pennsylvania Canal and its towpath became Theodore Roosevelt State Park in the early 1950s, when the berms were restored and the canal was refilled with water. The park was renamed Delaware Canal State Park in 1989. The U.S. Congress designated the Delaware Canal as a Registered National Historic Landmark and its towpath is a National Recreation Trail. Visitors to the park are given the chance to explore the canal in historic canal boats provided by the Delaware River Canal Boat Company. For more information, visit their Website at:

<http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/stateparks/parks/delawarecanal.aspx>



Volunteering in our Community Center Square Fire Company

As you may remember, last month (April) during our General Membership Meeting, Ed Ross of the Center Square Fire Company, put on a presentation of the history of firefighting in Whitpain Township. This was a fascinating lecture filled with exciting stories and facts of a firefighter's challenges — from yesterday and today. After the meeting (and after hearing about our concerns of our roof and chimney), they **VOLUNTEERED** once again, to the rescue of their community.

On Saturday, April 21, members of the CSFC and WVHS met at the 1895 Schoolhouse. With their ladder truck in tow, they carefully guided **John Simon**, Director of WVHS, to the top of the Schoolhouse for inspection of the roof and chimney. John, with camera in hand, took snapshots of the some of the damage sustained over the years and documented the conditions of the roof and chimney. (We guess it's a little worse than anticipated!)

The results are **we NEED a new roof and chimney**. John will be applying for additional grant monies through the PA Keystone Preservation that may match the funds recently received from the Department of Community and Economic Development and Frances Scheibner's estate. Hopefully, with the photos taken, and completing the application for a new grant, we will continue saving for the much needed repairs to our 1895 Schoolhouse.

We'd like to extend a **BIG THANK YOU** to our friends at Center Square Fire Company for their equipment and their time. It's comforting to know that you can depend on your neighbor in a time of need. Don't forget to give a little back to our firefighters when they reach out, too.

Pictured right (top): the inspection of the roof by Center Square Fire Company; (bottom) from left to right: Emmy Simon, Bob Whittock (WVHS Members), Bob MacKay, Captain of the fire police, John Simon (WVHS), Jason Licwinko and Ken Licwinko, CSFC firefighters.



WISSAHICKON VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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May Is a Time to Remember ... Memorial Day Services Scheduled

Memorial Day Services will be held Monday, May 28, 2007, 10:30a.m. at Boehm's United Church of Christ, Penllyn-Blue Bell Pike, to honor Whitpain Township's veterans who have lost their lives in the higher call of duty, protecting our freedom and serving our country. The U.S. Armed Forces have lost 70 veterans from Whitpain Township in various wars and we welcome you to join us in remembrance of them.

History of an American Business Homer Laughlin China Company ...

The world's largest manufacturer of dinnerware, the **Homer Laughlin China Company**, is located in the town of Newell, West Virginia. The famous pottery plant sprawls for more than a mile along the eastern side of the Ohio River and covers 67 acres.

Homer and Shakespeare Laughlin formed a partnership in 1871 for the import of English Graniteware. In 1873, the Laughlin Brothers accept a \$5,000 bonus from the City of East Liverpool, Ohio, for the purpose of erecting a four-kiln pottery. Ground was broken and the construction commenced that same year.

In 1874, the first stonewares are produced in those kilns. It is gray saltglazed stoneware with blue slip decoration. In 1876, the Laughlin Brothers win awards for their whiteware at the Centennial Exposition held in Philadelphia. In 1877, Homer Laughlin introduces the first distinctive American trademark, the Lion and Eagle Mark. This mark used on their early stoneware depicted a lion (representing the English china market) being devoured by an Eagle (representing the American china manufacturing).

In 1927, the management hired Staffordshire potter, Frederick Hurten Rhead, as art director and china designer. His most important contribution to Homer Laughlin China Company was his designs for a new ware called "Fiesta®" introduced in 1936, and is now among the most collected china products in the world. As originally designed, the line featured art deco styling and bold, bright colors. He also developed the "Harlequin" shape for Woolworth's in 1937. Rhead is credited for the popular "Virginia Rose" shape, which boasted many decal patterns.

His popular "Fiesta" ware went through significant changes in the 1960's before going out of production in 1969. Fiesta was reissued in 1986 with new contemporary colors to mark its 50th anniversary, and by December 5, 1997, the 500 millionth piece of Fiesta came out of the kiln. It continues to be a popular dinnerware throughout the world, a new color and shape is introduced each year. For additional information and history, visit their Website at <http://www.hlchina.com/>



 THE HOMER LAUGHLIN CHINA COMPANY

WISSAHICKON VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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

- Mon., May 14 **General Business Meeting** **7:30 PM**
"History of the Delaware Canal" – Susan Taylor, speaker
- Mon., May 21 **Board Meeting** **7:00 PM**
(At the 1895 Schoolhouse)
- Mon., June 11 **General Business Meeting / Annual Picnic** **to be announced**
Summer Picnic – location to be announced
- Summer Break **See you in September!**

*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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May 2007 Newsletter

Our Meeting:

"History of the Delaware Canal"