



Wissahickon Valley

historical society

Ambler
Lower Gwynedd
Whitpain

www.wvalleyhs.org

215-646-6541

info@wvalleyhs.org

P.O. Box 96, Ambler, PA 19002-0096

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Open House at the Franklinville School Sunday - July 15 1 to 4 p.m.



The Franklinville one-room school was built in 1858 on Morris Road just north-west of Normandy Farm. It served the residents of Franklinville. The school continued serving the local community until 1916 when students were transferred to the consolidated school on Skippack Pike.

The building was then neglected and might have fallen into ruin, but in 1917 it was purchased by Ralph Beaver Strassburger. The Strassburgers used the Franklinville school for the private education of their son Peter and for local social and cultural events. But by the early 1980s, the building was dilapidated. A group of Whitpain

resident came to the rescue and invested time, money, and lots of energy into restoring the building. It is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

At the July Open House, children may try on period clothing, write on the slate boards, and play games that would have been used in the late 1800s. Great photo-ops!

There will not be an Open House in August, but there will be one on the third Sunday of September. Parking is on the grass at the Franklinville site.

WVHS Picnic - normally held in June is planned for the 2nd Monday in September - the 10th at 5:30 - at Pat Plumb's. Thanks, Pat!

Details in the August newsletter.

WVHS election will be held at the same meeting.

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From the President's Desk by Russ Bellavance

If you have been attending meetings, volunteering at our sites, or reading the newsletter, you know that we are embarking on an exciting project of renovating the interior of the 1895 Public School - expanding the museum space into the basement, repainting the inside and outside (refreshing the Victorian era colors), improving the space by replacing the lighting and adding ceiling fans (so we don't have portable fans going in every direction, and upgrading our presentation equipment. We have also been rethinking our exhibits, with the guidance of new member (and museum expert) Elizabeth Bogel. Our goal is to have more inviting exhibit areas that tell the stories of Ambler, Lower Gwynedd, and Whitpain as well as our schools and that appeal to all visitors.



Our building has not had interior work in a long time, except for the extensive system upgrades done by Whitpain Township over the past 3 years. The building really needs these improvements and we are confident that the results will be worth the effort. Speaking of effort, we owe many, many thanks to those devoted volunteers who have been contributing countless hours on this project. We especially owe thanks to Joan Duxbury, who is serving as Project Manager. She and her sister Sally have practically lived at the building. We will need additional volunteers when we prepare to reopen the museum. You can let any Board member know if you are willing to help. No prior knowledge or experience is needed; in fact, it is a great way to learn about the collection and museums in general.

We have seldom asked our community and our general membership for anything, but now is the time. The project is not fully priced out, but we expect that the total project cost will be around \$100,000. We have launched a capital campaign and have begun soliciting donations from the community and various community organizations. You - our members - can help in two ways. The first way is by making a 100% tax-deductible contribution yourself. Please make your contribution payable to the Wissahickon Valley Historical Society - writing Capital Campaign on the purpose line. Checks may be mailed to the Society at P.O. Box 96 Ambler, PA 19002 or to me at 148 South Bethlehem Pike, Ambler, PA 19002. If your employer has a matching fund program, please also consider applying to them. The second way you can help is by soliciting businesses that you patronize in our service area. We have a Capital Campaign Contribution form that I can send to you. If you are willing to do this, please e-mail me at rcbellavance67@gmail.com, and I will send you the materials. If you think you have a good contact with an individual or business, I will be happy to meet with anyone to tell them our story and answer any questions. If possible, please make your donations by August 31.

We will have a Grand Reopening sometime in the Fall - once the contracting work has been completed and the new exhibits have been put into place. We hope that you will come and help us all celebrate the achievement and give thanks to all who worked on and/or financially supported the effort.

Mark Your Calendar

Tuesday, July 10 - Free community Carillon concert at St. Thomas' Church, Whitemarsh, Bethlehem Pike and Church Road. 7 p.m. - Carillon concert and 8 p.m. Brush Brothers Folk Singers. Other concerts and performances are scheduled for July 17, July 24, July 31, Aug. 7 and Aug. 14

Sunday, July 15 - Open House, Franklinville School, 1 to 4 p.m.

Tuesday thru Sat. 10 to 4 and Sunday 1 to 4 - Peter Wentz Farmstead - a Montgomery County park just off of Skippack Pike at Shearer Road. Check their website for any special events. A great place for kids and kids at heart.

Recent Donations

From Pat and Ronald Myers - a large wooden road sign from the intersection of Route 63 and 309. Thank you, Pat and Ronald, for sharing with us.

From Janet Wentz of Jamison - secretary's minutes in book form - from the Wissahickon (Whitpain, Ambler, and Lower Gwynedd) Grange - covering the time May 5, 1887 to Nov. 18, 1909. Janet is Ginny Sinn's cousin. Thank you, Ginny, for facilitating this donation. Watch for an article based on these minutes. Thanks to Buck Amey for supplying some additional information about the Grange and sites mentioned in the minutes. By the way, the Grange movement started in 1867 to advance and share methods of modern agriculture.

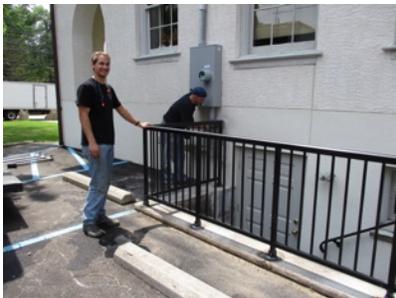


Last month we detailed a postcard of the Swiss Cottage Motel on 202. Several members e-mailed to share memories of other area motels - including the Lucky Well Motel in Spring House (after which the Lucky Well restaurant in Ambler is named), the Crossroads Motel on 202 nearer to Township Line, McCary's which had rooms for rent, and Jesse's Motel in Spring House. Thanks to Bernadette Dougherty and Michael Fondot for their input.

Works on 1895 Schoolhouse Continues

New, safer railings were installed recently on the outside basement stairway by Whitpain Township employees. (The railing complement those on the front stairway.) This side stairway and door will be used for entering the basement exhibit area.

A French drain will be installed in the basement - hopefully beginning by the end of July. This will protect the main area of the basement floor from moisture and be the first step in making the basement an exhibit area.



Plans include leaving exposed some of the stone wall in basement as well as pipes. There will be written explanations as to "how the building works". Storage in the basement will also be exposed - again offering insight into how the collection is managed.



Thanks to member handyman/craftsman Neal Bradley for completing repairs on several pieces of furniture that have been in storage for several years. Chairs and desks, doors and tables - all beautifully restored and ready for use in the museum and meeting room. At right, a restored child's wooden chair.



Community Gathered for Unveiling of Historic Marker

On June 23rd, a large crowd (see below) gathered at the Boehm's United Church of Christ on Penllyn-Blue Bell Pike where a new historic marker was uncovered. It is in honor of John Philip Boehm. Thanks to Chris Raines for the photo.

The marker is one of over 2000 markers that tell the important and interesting stories that are part of the history of Pennsylvania. The state web-site for the Historical and

Museum Commission is a bit awkward to use, but it is interesting to see other sites that have been chosen and the parts of Pennsylvania history they represent.

There are a number of historic churches, synagogues, and meeting houses in our area. If you would like to write a short article about any one of them, please consider submitting it to our newsletter at www.wvalleyhs.org Thank you!



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