



Wissahickon Valley

historical society

Ambler
Lower Gwynedd
Whitpain

www.wvalleyhs.org
P.O. Box 96, Ambler, PA 19002

215-646-6541

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Wissahickon Valley Historical Society Annual Picnic

Please join us for our annual
picnic on
Monday, June 13, 2016
Pat Plumb's home
910 Valley Rd.
Blue Bell, PA 19422



The society will provide baked ham and soft drinks.
Please bring a side dish or a dessert that is easy to share.

We will hold a "corn auction".

Please bring a wrapped item of value (?)
or interest to be auctioned.

The fun is in seeing what you get.

Also enjoy a short presentation by member Charlie Miller.

RSVP to Jeannie Bellavance (215-646-6541) by June 10
so we can best plan for the number of guests.

Hope to see you there!

From the President's Desk

Our Open House on May 15 demonstrated the benefits of collaborating with other community institutions. The Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association invited us to participate in their open house at Evans-Mumbower Mill, which they also billed as celebrating our area's Welsh and German heritage. We happily accepted as did the Morgan Log House group from Kulpsville. It was a typical day for the spring we have been having - meaning that it was overcast, cool, windy, and drizzly.



The WVWA was kind enough to provide us with a canopy, and we set up our table with our eye-catching new tablecloth/banner. We selected some old farm and farmhouse tools to be our main display, and we created cards with hints as to what they were.

People coming to the Mill were drawn to our table and really enjoyed having a chance to touch the past and to try to guess what the tools were. There was one tool that nobody guessed correctly. It looks like a device for torturing someone, but it is actually an asparagus

buncher made in Philadelphia. It turns out that there was a large asparagus and strawberry farm near the current Wing's Field. Who knew?

Many of the visitors who saw our table at the Mill were also drawn to look at the notecards we have with photos of the 1895 Whitpain Public School and the Franklinville School. Upon hearing that these buildings were also open, several visitors proceeded to visit one or both of our schools. (The 1895 Schoolhouse had four docents and hosted 12 visitors.) We had hands-on activities at the schools. Thanks to all the volunteers who got the buildings ready and who served as docents for the Open House.

Speaking of Open Houses, we are sponsoring and organizing a Whitpain Community Open House day, which will be held on Sunday, September 18. Many other Whitpain churches and community organizations have already agreed to participate, and we expect more will join up. We will be creating a booklet with photos and information about each organization and with a map of open house locations to celebrate the event. There will be opportunities for local businesses to advertise in the booklet. Please mark your calendar and think about whether you can help make this new event a great success. Special thanks go to Bob Whittock for creating this event and for leading the charge to get other local groups involved.

Franklinville Plaque Installed

Thanks to WVHS member Dr. John Stoller for installing the plaque at the Franklinville School recognizing its listing on the National Registry of Historic Places. MaryLou McFarland ordered the plaque which is a donation from Marie Goldkamp. Thanks, John, MaryLou, and Marie.

WVHS Receives Quester Grant

President Russ Bellavance and Board Member Marie Goldkamp recently accepted a \$1000 grant from the Blue Bell #82 Quester group. The \$1000 is a combined amount whereby Pennsylvania State Questers' Grant Committee matched the \$500 from the local group.

This is the latest in a series of collaborations with local Quester groups. Claudette Fleischman (center) is the chapter's grant chairperson; Mary Anne Blarcom (far right) is the chapter's president. Carolyne Wurzer (far left) is a member of the WVHS and a Quester and has been a valuable liaison.



The grant allows the society to transfer its collection of slides and negatives of local sites and events to CDs and to help catalogue, properly preserve, and share photos of the community.

Photography of the area began in the 1800s. Clara Beck, in addition to writing and teaching extensively about local history, took photos of local sites and people. The WVHS has a wonderful collection of her writings and photographs which was recently catalogued by Emmy Simon.

In the later part of the 20th century, local historian George Peck collected and identified photos and illustrations of buildings, people, and activities that were donated to area historical societies. He mentioned Clara Beck, MayEllen and Henry Whittock, Louise and Merrill Zimmerman, and Peggy Rush as well as Becky Huttinger as the sources of his collection. Other photographers acknowledged are Vicki Ochocki, Bob Whittock, Robert J. Wise, Jr., Ron Cione, Warren Stimpson, and David Swartley. George Peck prepared several slide shows to share local history with local groups.

There are also numerous aerial photos of the area. They were taken in the 1930s from planes flying out of Wings Field.



Ambler historian Frank Russo also developed a slide show which focused on Ambler. This collection is also being transferred to CD. The old saying that "a picture is worth a thousand words" is true! All of this work represents a wonderful legacy - now properly preserved.

The grant will also allow the society to further share their collection with local groups - especially in local school, libraries, and borough and township buildings. Important photographs will be enlarged and framed for installation.

The society continues to collect photographs and oral recordings of local sites, events, and citizens. As part of the grant, a digital voice recorder is now available to us. Member Herb Levy recorded his WWII memories for a high school senior last year. We hope to involve more high school students in recording additional interviews.

Russ Bellavance is working to interpret the historic deeds some of which came from the Whitpain Historical Society. The grant will partially pay for having a local deed flattened and framed.

Questers is an international organization for those interested in history and preserving artifacts and buildings that make that history come alive. Quester was started in 1944 by Elizabeth Bess Bardens in Fort Washington, PA and has chapters in 43 states and 2 provinces. Each chapter can support conservation project in its area.

We are very grateful for the Blue Bell Quester's support of this project. It is already paying dividends! We were recently approached to provide local historic photos for a new store in the area. We were able to easily and safely show them appropriate photos to complement their desire to feature local history.

THANKS to our neighbors and collaborators - Blue Bell Questers.

WVHS Display Travels to Stony Creek Elementary

The Society's display featuring school life a hundred years ago moved to Stony Creek Elementary in May. Librarian Jan Stokes (photo at left) shared two of the school's American Girl dolls from the era and helped set up the display. In the fall, we would like to assemble a display about the Lenni Lenape to share with local schools.



Thanks to everyone who helped with our Market Day.

Mark Your Calendar

June 2 - Strawberry Festival - SpringHouse Estates - 9 to 2 - rain or shine

June 2 - Meet Ulysses S. Grant - Wissahickon Valley Public Library, Blue Bell, 7 p.m.

June 7 - WVHS board meeting

June 1 - Hope Lodge outdoor concert/bring your own picnic - Ambler Symphony - 7 p.m.

June 13 - WVHS annual picnic - see front page of newsletter for details

June 17/18 - Ambler's Art and Music Festival

June 19 - Open House - 1895 Schoolhouse - 1 to 4 p.m.

