



Wissahickon Valley
historical society

Ambler
Lower Gwynedd
Whitpain

www.wvalleyhs.org

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P.O. Box 96, Ambler, PA 19002

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March 2016

The Wissahickon Valley Historical Society
announces its
March 14, 2016 meeting.

Program: Railroading on the North Penn

a Power Point presentation illustrating the history of trains on the line between Philadelphia and Bethlehem from 1856 to the present.

Presented by Dale W. Woodland who has published several books and many articles and is Director of Operations for the Reading Railroad Heritage Museum in Hamburg, PA



The meeting will be held at the 1895 Schoolhouse on Skippack Pike.

March 14 at 7:30 p.m.

Please note that the parking lot is still a bit rough. We will have handicapped parking marked. Though the parking lot is lit, please consider bringing a flashlight to make walking a bit safer. Parking is permissible on the round driveway in front of the Korean Church.

Wissahickon Valley Historical Society www.wvalleyhs.org info@wvalleyhs.
Serving Lower Gwynedd, Ambler, and Whitpain
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Mark Your Calendar

March 13 - Hope Lodge Open House, 1 to 4 p.m., Founders' Day - free admission

March 14 - WVHS Monthly Meeting at the 1895 Schoolhouse - 7:30 p.m.

April 10 - Victorian Tea Party, Clifton House, Fort Washington, 1 p.m. Order by phone - 215-342-0739

April 16 - WVHS Meeting - tour of Roth Farm on DeKalb Pike. The historic house/barn Roth Farm is managed by Delaware Valley University and contains an important collection of agricultural artifacts in its 18th/19th century buildings.

April 20 - "Ladies Night Out" sponsored by The Woman's Club of Whitpain - a fundraiser to benefit local charities including the Wissahickon Valley Public Library - 5:30 social/6:30 dinner at Meadowlands Country Club, Blue Bell. Call Judy Hahn (215-542-8366) for tickets - \$42 per person.

Market Day Date

WVHS's annual Market Day is set for May 7 at the 1895 Schoolhouse from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. This is a major fund raiser for our group, but it is also an important outreach for the WVHS.

Please mention the event to anyone who might want to rent a space for the sale. Details are on the WVHS website - www.wvalleyths.org. Plants will be available for sale. Mother's Day is May 8 so the timing is right for lovely flowers as well as garden veggies. The historical society will have their annual book sale on the porch. If you have books to donate, please bring them to the schoolhouse or contact 215-542-7753 for pick-up. There will also be the famous bake-sale. If anyone is interested in taking on a chili/hotdog stand, our kitchen is great shape.

Whitpain Township Historic Property Survey List

Bob Whittock recently completed a list of historic properties in Whitpain. A copy is at the 1895 Schoolhouse. A complementary set of photos would be a great project.

February Meeting Well Attended

The February at the Blue Bell library was well attended and very interesting.

The meeting started with President Russ Bellavance giving an update on Whitpain Township's proposed work on the 1895 Schoolhouse. Members voted to support the cooperative efforts of the WVHS board and Whitpain Township.

The program was jointly sponsored by the WVHS and the Wissahickon Valley library.

Dr. Stephen Phillips from the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology presented a visually rich program about medicine in ancient Egypt. He invited all to a new special exhibit at the museum "The Golden Age of King Midas".





Volunteers at Work

Thursday morning is a busy time at the 1895 Schoolhouse. There are usually 7 or 8 volunteers accessioning items, arranging displays, helping visitors, and working on building maintenance.

At left, new member Sally Zeller vacuums the library blinds. Sally and her sister Joan Duxbury have taken on the library at their current project. Joan, a retiree of AmChem, will next be working on our AmChem collection.

Thanks to Tyler and Zayne Brunner for moving the school desks upstairs to the new setting for the schoolhouse museum.

Neal Bradley (right) has been repairing and painting doors in the building to bring them to fire code while keeping them authentic to the 1895 time period.

Bob Whittock has compiled a list of jobs and projects that are available for adoption. The Schoolhouse is open from 9 to 12 on Thursday. Many thanks to our volunteers.



Recent Donations

Fran Treisbach recently donated a photo of the 1933 Whitpain High School girls basketball team. She provided a list of names and wonderful details to go with the photo. For example, girls basketball in the 1930s (and into the 1960s) used half court rules. There were 6 players on a team: 3 defense and 3 offense players who stayed on their respective ends of the court. Fran's full story is on display with the photo at the 1895 Schoolhouse.

Buck Amey recently called the WVHS and offered a set of photos and documents from Ambler High School and Shady Grove Middle School. The items are a wonderful addition to our school archives, but the story behind them is also interesting. A number of years ago a group of students noticed the items in a dumpster outside the school and checked with teacher/coach Frank Licopole. He suggested that they retrieve the items, and he organized them. Most of the photos are not identified, but they represent a wonderful record of activities - sports, drama, music at Wissahickon schools. This would make a great project for anyone interested in processing and cataloguing a collection.



Building a History - Story by Story

In a recent newsletter, it was mentioned that Blue Bell Elementary parents and students are putting together a history of their school. Parent Joyce Keller has gathered items from the Township, the school records, the WVHS, and first hand stories to be used in a planned display at the school.



By chance several WVHS members are retired teachers who taught at Blue Bell in years past. Several members were also students in the school's early days. From them, we learned about the Carolyn Haywood book *Away Went the Balloons* which is based on a balloon release that took place each year from the school fair in the 1960s and 1970s. The school fair was mentioned in the book. Fran Treisbach recently noticed the Whitpain June Fair banner (shown above) in our collection. She said that the banner is from a Blue Bell Elementary fair - held on the 1st weekend of June each year. She remembers games, horse rides, and a bake sale on the playground which is between the "new" school and the 1916 building. She remembered two teachers of the 1950s - Mrs. Burkart and Mrs. Morley. Both of their husbands were stationed in Korea at the time.

Dot MacDermott remembered that long time Wissahickon teacher Merritt Bender would be in charge of cooking the BBQ chicken to be served at the fair dinner. Emmy Simon remembers her sister making large flowers from various materials to sell at the craft sale. Please share any memories you might have of early Blue Bell Elementary days.

Update on Ambler Sites

No news on the development at Lindenwold Estate. Preservation Pennsylvania did recently place the site on its Pennsylvania At Risk list. This means it is one of "the state's most endangered historic resources". It was nominated by Residents for Open Space at Lindenwold Estate. Check out their web-site for updates.

Watch for an article about the Mary Ambler house in the next newsletter. The gentleman who owned the house recently died. The house may be the oldest house in Ambler.



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