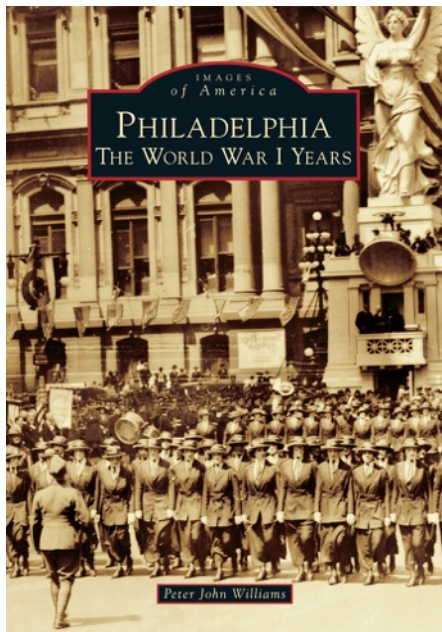


Monday, November 13  
at 7 p.m.  
Program at 7:30 p.m.



## Philadelphia - The WWI Years

Presented by Peter Williams -  
author and historian

In honor of Veterans' Day  
join us for a visually rich program by Peter Williams  
including photographs, poster art and other images  
of life in Philadelphia during and after the War.

Accompanied by an exhibit of  
WWI artifacts in the WVHS museum

### Mark Your Calendar:

Thursday, Nov. 9 - 9 to 6, Friday, Nov. 10 - 9 to 12 - HolidayBazaar - SpringHouse  
Estates. Open House at the 1895 Schoolhouse on

Sunday, Nov. 12 - 2 p.m. - Worcester Historical Society - The Home Front: How Did War  
II Affect Worcester?

Sunday, Nov. 19 - 1 to 4 p.m. - Open House, WVHS, 1895 Schoolhouse

Sunday, Dec. 10 - Member Holiday Party

**Reminder:** WVHS Membership dues can be mailed to MaryLou  
McFarland, 500 Trinity Place, Ambler, PA 19002-5836

## A Walk Through Penllyn, Lower Gwynedd Township

Penllyn, located on either side of Penllyn Pike in Lower Gwynedd Township, has a rich history. The area was settled by the Welsh in the late 1600's. By the time of the Revolution, almost half of the population was German. A very enjoyable and informative diary by Sally Wister was written during the fall of 1777 when Colonial troops were stationed in the area and Sally, a young girl whose family had sent her to the country to be safe during the War, wrote of her encounters with them. Editions - one for young readers - are available today.

In the mid- to late- 1800s, the area contained several large estates. The arrival of the railroad made the area more accessible to a variety of settlers. Some wealthy Philadelphia families built summer homes in the area. There were African Americans living in the area from the early 1700s. Some of them had been held as slaves until about 1794 when the Quakers resolved to abolish slavery. There is also suggestions that Penllyn had a connection to the Underground Railroad. More African American arrived on the actual railroad in the late 1800s.

The farms employed local workers as well as some who had moved north after the Civil War. Some African Americans had set up businesses; some came to work on local estates. Several African Americans who live in Penllyn area today can trace their family history in the area to the early 1800s. Many families can trace their roots to Westmoreland County, Virginia. It has always been a close knit community. and the Penllyn Home Builders' Association actively helped residents finance the purchase of homes in the community. The Bethlehem Baptist Church was, from early days, the heart of the community.

### ***Suggested walk:***

Park on Old Penllyn Pike - at the edge of Ingersoll Park (named for a long-time Gwynedd family). On weekends, one can park next to the train station - on Old Penllyn Pike.

Walk towards the train station. On the right is a small white home - which is recognizable as a former one-room school. Until 1923, this was the Penllyn School. After 8th grade, a student could attend Ambler High School.

The current Penllyn train station dates from the 1930s.

A short underground passage leads to the continuation of Old Penllyn Pike. The first and second houses on the left were part of what was a complex including a store, a blacksmith shop, and the post office. The Post Office was established in 1858. (A post box from the office is in our collection.)

Proceeding on down Old Penllyn Pike on the right is a house that was constructed as a Japanese tea house for the Sesquicentennial Exposition in 1926. It was then moved to this site and used as a church. It is now a lovely private residence.



Just before Penllyn Pike on the left is a large, multi-windowed building (left). In the early 20th century, this was the Penllyn Holiday House owned by the YWCA of Philadelphia.

Stop at Penllyn Pike - waiting for the light to give safe passage and to view the church across the street. The Bethlehem Baptist Church was incorporated in 1888. Its first two buildings were constructed on the parking lot to your left. In 1906 the congregation bought a stone chapel across the street from Mt. Pleasant Baptist and added to it. In the early 2000s, the congregation decided - after serious controversy in the community - to move to the then empty former mansion and former synagogue at the corner of Penllyn Pike and Houston Road.



Look across Penllyn to the right at a stately white house. The original parts of the house were probably built by William Foulke. At one time there was a grist mill nearby. The mill was demolished in 1896. The house has been in the same family for years.



After carefully crossing, continue down Trewellyn Avenue. Many of the houses along the street were built in the late 1800s. They have been lovingly cared for and individualized. In one of these houses John Tolliver's son, Clarence, was born in 1889. He was the first

African American child born in Penllyn village.

In 1888, Benjamin and Rosie Knox moved to a house on the street. Two of the original members of the Bethlehem Baptist Church, they were the first African Americans to live in the village.

Another house along Trewellyn was moved in 1924 from Penllyn Pike and Gypsy Hill Road where it had been the toll house on the Springhouse-Penllyn Tollway in. It had been in use as a toll house beginning in 1880.



At the end of Trewellyn Avenue one can continue on a pedestrian path to Penllyn Woods, part of Lower Gwynedd's park system and on the Wissahickon Watershed Trail. The park would be a great stop for a picnic. There is a drinking fountain there - though it may be turned off in the winter. Formed in 1994, the park came about after seven years of litigation. The area had been slated by a developer for 108 houses.



Recross the creek by a paved path just to the right of the Trewellyn entrance. (There will be a small brick building between Trewellyn and the paved path.) Follow it to the edge of a baseball field and a larger park. This was the site of the Penllyn Elementary School which was built in 1923. At that time, the Penllyn School became segregated and, over the years, it was allowed to fall into disrepair. As result of Brown vs. the Board of Education and several very active local citizens, the Penllyn School was closed and in 1955 Penllyn students were transferred to SpringHouse Elementary. (A fuller recounting of this history can be found in the book ***Penllyn Village: Lest We Forget*** by E. Gloria Stewart Jones. There is a copy of the book in the WVHS library.) The site is now called Penllyn Park.

As you leave the park, turn right and return to Trewellyn Ave. Turn left on Trewellyn, carefully recross Penllyn Pike, and continue back down Old Penllyn Pike to your car.

### **WVHS Receives Additions to Conard Family Collection**

The WVHS recently added to the Conard Family Collection. Jesse Hallowell visited the 1895 Schoolhouse in September to present the 1836 marriage certificate of Peter Conard and Sarah Ambler. It is a traditional certificate - hand-written on parchment. The document contains the signatures of all those who attended the wedding. The Conards have a long history in the area and our collection includes quilts, tools (augers, hammers, etc. made in the Conard mill), and a tea set. Dot and Henry Conard were founding members of the WVHS.



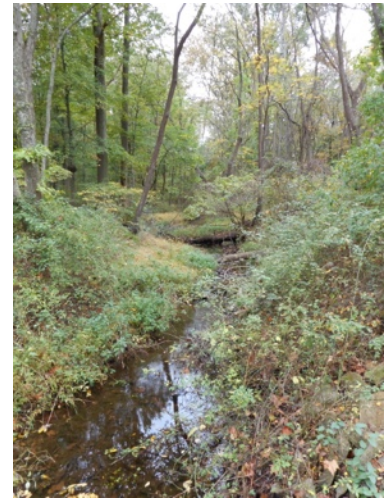
## WVHS Tours Manderley

In October a lively group of WVHS members and friends toured Manderley - the home and property of Eliza Walbridge at the corner of Morris Road and Penllyn Pike. The main house - like many older buildings - has been added onto and modified over the years. There are records and clues that suggest that there were settlers on this spot in the early 1700s.



An inscribed stone inside the springhouse says "iR1755". (On some early maps the name of Robinson shows up....a connection?) Eliza has maps and papers tracing some of the land use and development at the turn of the 20th century. WVHS has maps that show use of the land in the late 1800s. Additional research will be done at the Montgomery County Office of Recorder of Deeds in Norristown.

One can note abundant evidence of past uses of the area. Eliza mentioned that when her grandmother purchased in the land in the early 1900s, much of the area had been cleared and had been cultivated. Young trees now flourish.



Bob Whittock's grandparents lived and worked on the farm in the early 20th century. Their house and other buildings dot the property - including barns and houses in active use. The driveway off of Penllyn Pike leads to the main house and barn and then continues on into the woods. Eliza explained that supposedly the driveway originally led on to Mather's Mill (or Bone Mill on at least one map) on the Wissahickon. Most mills stopped operation in the late 1800s. The roadway is now private.

Many thanks to Eliza for sharing Manderley with us. She explained that their goal is to preserve the land as part farm land and part natural areas. The farming is being done using environmentally respectful ways. Thanks to Eliza and her family.

## Volunteers at Work

Sean MacDermott (grandson of members Dot and Don) recently lent a hand at the 1895 Schoolhouse. He helped cleaned displays and assemble the WWI display. Volunteers are always welcome - and there are plenty of short-term and long-term jobs to do.

Every Thursday from 9 to noon members come in - for an hour or two - and work on a variety of projects. There are often items to be accessioned. Displays for schools and township/boroughs need to be assembled. Items in the textile collection should be refolded every few months. And, of course, there is always dusting to be done. Lots of good conversation too. All are welcome.

