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Ambler Through the Eyes of Newt Howard, photographer and local historian

At the 1895 Schoolhouse
Skippack Pike and School Road, Blue Bell
Monday, October 12 at 7:30 p.m.
Program followed by light refreshment and conversation.
Sponsored by the Wissahickon Valley Historical Society

Open House

1895 Schoolhouse

Franklinville School



**Sunday,
Oct. 18
1 - 4 p.m.**



The Schoolhouse is open on Thursday mornings from 10 to 12. Volunteers work on accessioning the collection, cleaning and updating displays, and research projects. Members are always welcome.

Mark Your Calendar

October 2 and 3 - First Friday and Octoberfest in Ambler, WVHS will have a table - volunteers welcome - Call Russ at 215-643-5048

October 2 - Centre Square Fire Expo - Wentz Run Park

October 12 - WVHS monthly meeting - Program - Ambler Through the Eyes of Newt Howard, photographer and local historian - 7:30 p.m. - 1895 Schoolhouse

October 18 - Open House - 1895 Schoolhouse and Franklinville School, 1 - 4 p.m.

October 18 - Open House - Hope Lodge - 12:30 - 4 p.m.

October 24 - Cemetery Walk and Open House, Boehm's United Church of Christ, Blue Bell,, 12 to 4. Rain date - October 31

October 24 - Evans-Mumbower Mill - Pumpkin Painting - 5 to 6, Ghost Tour - 6 to 8

November 7 and 8 - Revolutionary War re-enactment - Hope Lodge, Fort Washington

Update on Wings' Field by Peg Johnston

I recently noticed lawn signs in Whitpain about the "rezoning of Wings Field". WVHS hosted a program about the historic Wings Field several years ago so I was curious. I asked WVHS member Rick Shorin about the issue. He is a member of the Whitpain Township Planning Commission.

He explained that Advanced Wings, that manages the airport, is asking for a revision of its zoning plan. (A little background: Wings was established in 1930 [one the first airports in the country]; Whitpain's original zoning plan was drawn up in 1950. Wings is actually zoned as residential on the 1950 map and the airport is considered a "non-conforming use".) As an airport, it is under the jurisdiction of the FAA (operations in air above the airport, air traffic control, safety, some airport facilities), the state (operations on the ground, licenses, permits), and the township (use of the land).



Wings recently approached the Whitpain Planning Commission with an airport zoning plan that includes: that the airport would not become a commercial airport, that a substantial portion (minimum 60%) of the land would never be developed, that Wings would have the ability to put 5 houses near Narcissa Road, that Wings could replace hangars that are currently on site and add new hangars as approved by a Pennsylvania Supreme Court ruling, that there would be no change in runway length (currently 3800 feet), that an aviation museum could be built, and that they could open a private aviation club to serve those who use the airport.

Rick noted that newer, small planes have longer wings than older planes. This makes the planes more aerodynamic (efficient) and quieter than traditional planes, but they also require a bigger hangar. In recent years Wings has built noise barriers, land berms, and a parking lot for aircraft next to the runway to reduce noise levels. Increased noise is a concern of neighbors.

Rick also mentioned that, though it is **not** Wings' intention, under the current zoning (residential), up to 200 homes **could** be built on the 217 acres controlled by Wings Field.

To see a more detailed explanation of the the proposed airport overlay district, here is the link: [ord_4_239_NML_update.pdf](#) Those against the proposed re-zoning have a web-site at Change.org. Search for Wings Field. The proposal will be discussed again at the October or November Planning Commission meeting. Check Whitpain's web-site for date and time.

If you have any questions and opinions about this proposal please let us know and we will share them in our November newsletter.

Membership Reminder

The 2015-2016 membership forms with the program list were mailed in September. Please return to MaryLou McFarland, 500 Trinity Place, Ambler, PA 19002-5836. Sending the newsletter by e-mail saves the society about \$1 per issue. Last minute updates are also possible via e-mail. Please consider giving a \$10 gift membership to someone who is interested in local history and education. Membership supports the continued work of the historical society.

Assessment of 1895 Schoolhouse Building Continues

Whitpain Township officials and contractors continue to make their assessment of the building exterior, the parking lot, and the building systems. When the assessment is complete, it will be presented to the Whitpain supervisors. At the recent WVHS board meeting John Simon shared that all involved place value on authenticity as they plan renovations. To that end, they are currently favoring upgrading the steam heating system rather than replacing it.

Developing a Long-Range Plan for the Society

Bob Whittock, WVHS board member and historian, has been leading the society in doing some long-range planning. To such end, he developed the following list. Members are welcome to share ideas and suggestions. Please consider sharing your thoughts about any or all of the following areas.

- * Ideas on improving the interior of the school houses (1895 Schoolhouse and Franklinville)
- * Ideas on improving the displays
- * Ideas on new displays
- * Ways to improve the grounds around the buildings
- * Way to record and publicize historic buildings, etc. in Ambler, Lower Gwynedd, and Ambler
- * Ideas for publicity, gaining members, etc.
- * Ideas on ways to solicit donations from companies, individuals, etc.

As Bob so rightly says, "Although we are an Historical Society, we should continue to upgrade and plan for the future."

All ideas are welcome. They can be sent to Russ Bellavance or to the society's e-mail address - info@wvalleyhs.com - which is monitored by John Simon.

WVHS Places Exhibit in Shady Grove Library

An exhibit featuring photos of the original Shady Grove Elementary (whose foundation can be found in the woods behind the current Shady Grove) and of students and teachers from the early 1900s as well as artifacts from the time was recently installed in school's library. Thanks to librarian Donna Merin for sharing the space in her modern, bright facility. Dot MacDermott and Peg Johnston hope that the exhibit can be moved to other elementary libraries in the district in future months.

First Friday/Octoberfest in Ambler

Watch for photos of WVHS's participation in Ambler's First Friday and Octoberfest in the November newsletter. Numerous members helped with set-up and represented WVHS at its table during the two day event.

At the recent WVHS board meeting, Frank Russo was present. We are looking forward to Frank leading walking tours of Ambler. Several board members remember being introduced to WVHS through Frank's walks - especially a ghost walk down Butler Pike - in the 1990s. Watch for details!

Recent Requests

Via e-mail and visits at our two buildings, we have had requests for more information on several topics. If you know more about Gwynhurst Hotel and Kindle Hill farm in Gwynedd, the Fitzwater family in Whitpain, the Underground Railroad in the Ambler area, please let us know.



Issue Update

The Ambler Borough Hall was auctioned last Thursday. According to Bernadette Dougherty, the Borough wanted \$850,000 and the highest bid was \$675,000. The building will now be put on the market. Ambler Borough offices are now in the former Mattison Avenue Elementary School.

No news on the proposed development of Lindenwold Estate. Check www.lindenwoldestate.org for news.

If you notice a sign or building or event of interest, please explore and/or ask questions. And then consider writing an article for our newsletter. We all count on each other to keep an eye on our community.



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