



Wissahickon Valley

historical society

Ambler
Lower Gwynedd
Whitpain

www.wvalleyhs.org
215-646-6541

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Box 96, Ambler, Pa 19002
Vol. 19, Issue 10

Wissahickon Valley Historical Society
**Rescheduled
Annual Picnic**

Please join us for our rescheduled
annual picnic on
Monday, September 10
at 5 p.m.
at Pat Plumb's home
910 Valley Rd.
Blue Bell, PA 19422



Baked ham and soft drinks provided.

Please bring a side dish or a dessert that is easy to serve.

Election of WVHS officers will be held after the meal.

Extra chairs would be welcome.

We will also hold a "corn auction". Please bring a wrapped item of value (?)
or of interest to be auctioned. The fun is in seeing what you get.

Please put this on your calendar

and RSVP to Pat Plumb

215-646-3166

fayetteplumb2@aol.com

or

Jean Bellavance

215-646-6541

Let's hope for good weather!!!!!!

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Mark Your Calendar

- August 19 - Sunday - Open House at Evans Mumbower Mill - Dog Days and Ice Cream Social - 1 to 4 p.m.
- August 19 - Sunday - Open House - Morris Arboretum's Grist Mill at Bloomfield Farm - 1 to 4 p.m. - admission charged
- September 8 - Saturday - 28th annual Wings N' Wheels - Wings Field - tour historic airport with family activities - 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- September 15 - PikeFest - sponsored by Lower Gwynedd Township - WVHS will have a table.
- September 16 - Open House - Franklinville School - 1 to 4
- September 30 - Sunday - Walk the Wissahickon - check www.wvva.org/walk for details
- October 13 - Ceremony honoring 32 Revolutionary War Patriots interred in Wentz's United Church of Christ cemetery. National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution (NSDAR)



More on Local Motels

Thanks to Harry Heckler, Sr. for information about Jesse's Motel which was located on a piece of the property currently occupied in Spring House by the Giant Supermarket. Also the Lucky Well Motel that was located on Bethlehem Pike in Spring House - now the location of the ACTS Corporation Northern Region office. Additional details about the Wyndham Hotel in Ambler: it is located on the NE corner of Butler Ave. and Spring Garden Street. It was owned by the Bowers family. Ralph Bowers, son of the owner, was a graduate of Ambler High School, class of 1954. Thanks to Harry for this information. When we received information from readers it is added to our files - in this case to our collection about Lower Gwynedd and Ambler businesses.

Review of the Museum of the American Revolution by Peg Johnston

With early teenage grandchildren in town for a visit this summer, it seemed a good time to go to the Museum of the American Revolution.

One enters via the Declaration of Independence Plaza located at 3rd and Chestnut Streets. There is street parking nearby as well as several parking lots within several blocks. The main part of the museum is on the second floor - with a series of rooms **full** of artifacts, audio-visual displays, and hands-on activities. Our group included adults, teenagers, and elementary school students. All of us found things of interest and learned something new. There is acknowledgement of the importance of women, Native Americans, and African Americans in the struggle for independence, but it would be important to have some knowledge ahead of time and perhaps a basic timeline to follow - especially for younger children. We took a break half way through and had a good lunch time talk. I can imagine pulling out a paper time-line to help focus conversation over lunch.

There is a very reasonably priced cafeteria and small gift shop as well as a hands-on activity room for younger children on the first floor. There are wheel chairs available for loan and several elevators. A tip: Borrow a museum membership from either the Wissahickon Valley library or the Upper Dublin library. It saved us about \$100 on entrance fees and in the cafeteria.



This Week at the 1895 Schoolhouse

One step in making the basement an integral part of the 1895 museum has been to deal with moisture which can seep in through the stone walls. This probably wasn't as much an issue when the building was surrounded by grass because water would soak into the sod. When the surrounding area was paved, instead of soaking in, water would run down hill - in

this case towards the building's foundation. See above left.

One solution is a French drain. On Monday July 30, Dean Bender from Dry Basements removed a path of concrete along three sides of the basement interior - making a trench in which



stone and pipes were added. The pipes were covered and two sump pumps were installed. This will also help make the building more stable.

This is the corner (see left) of the basement where the fossil from the Snowden family will be safely displayed as well as a collection of minerals from the area and a case of Lenni Lenape artifacts will be shared.

Painting will start on the second floor and outside next. As closets are painted, collections will be returned to storage. Exhibits will then be set up on all three floors. Anyone interested in helping with set-ups is welcome.



St. Helena's Catholic Church Information Sought

St. Helena's Catholic Church in Whitpain - located on DeKalb Pike - will be celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2018. In preparing for the celebration, they are trying to locate the site of the original building which was built in 1919 on the site.

WVHS is looking through maps of the time for information. The original building stood, though not in use, well into the 20th century. If any WVHS member has information or memories, please contact us and we'll get you in contact with the anniversary committee.

According to *Whitpain - A Tricentennial Reflection*, St. Helena's was founded in 1919 with Reverend Francis Higgins serving as its first pastor. The Dougherty family donated a building and land on the west side of DeKalb Pike at Yost Road. It is the location of this early building that is being sought. It was referred to as the Shrine of the Little Flower because of a relic which the church held.

Recent Donations

Thanks to Paul Langer for donating a set of newspapers which document historic events of the 1960/70s. We have a good collection of historic newspapers and plan to do a special exhibit next year. Thanks also to Paul for several pieces of coal which will complement our collection of locally important minerals. Coal was used to heat 1895 building in its early days.

A Change of Pace - Skateboarding

As we have been packing up artifacts for safe-keeping while renovations take place, it has been fun to reconnect with items of interest. Since skateboarding is so popular in Ambler, an old skateboard caught my eye. It was donated by the Lexa family. A visit to the Ambler Skate Shop on Butler Pike revealed some background information. Craig Lutz explained that our skateboard is from the early 1970s - not quite an antique but collectable and certainly indicative of an era. Craig has another old skateboard on display, but he said that the narrower, smaller skateboards are becoming popular again as people use them for transportation rather than for tricks. A brand named Penny is made in Austratia.

A label on the bottom of our skateboard gives details of its features and the manufacturer's name. A Goggle search added little other information. One interesting feature is the name Sharon handprinted on the bottom. Nice to think of a girl skateboarding in the 1970s!



As we unpack and reassemble displays at the 1895 Schoolhouse, there will be many more interesting items. Many of the items would gain from additional research. And If you have skills (carpentry, sewing, artistic, computer, window washing, etc.) we can put you to work on short term (or long term) projects. If you'd like to be involved in putting together our new museum, please contact Peg at 215-542-7753.

“Curious Wissahickon Valley”

The Philadelphia Inquirer has a feature under the heading Curious Philly. Readers send in questions and staff writers research and share the answer in a regular column. A recent column answered an question about why Suburban Station (across the street from City Hall) is called that. In this case, the answer is that when it was built in 1930, the station was the terminus for Pennsylvania Realroads's “suburban electric trains”. It was a presursor to the SEPTA regional rail system whose hub- and spoke-model has been largely unchanged since the early 20th century.

If you are curious about some local building, street, or event, please send your question to this newsletter and we'll help you find an answer/explanation.



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