

Monday - April 9, 2012 Meet "Lt. Edwin Fretz", Civil War Soldier 1832-1901

A native of Doylestown, Lt. Fretz served with the 104th PA Vol. Infantry Regiment of which were primarily Bucks County recruits. Both before and after the war, he was employed as a printer by W. W. H. Davis, editor and owner of the local *Doylestown Democrat*, who also served as the regiment's commanding colonel.

As portrayed by Dick Neddenriep.



7:30 p.m. at the 1895
Schoolhouse

Pancake Breakfast in support of
the new headquarters for the
Whitpain "Second Alarmers" Ambulance Squad
April 15 - 7:30 to 11 a.m.
at the Manor House of
Prophecy Creek Park
where Narcissa Rd. T's into Skippack Pike
This is a great chance to see one of Whitpain Township's newest parks
and event sites and to support our neighbors.



SpringHouse Questers Margaret Cass and Ethel Wohlhagen join WVHS treasurer John Simon at the February meeting. The Questers presented a grant to help with the purchase of new light-blocking shades for the 1895 Schoolhouse.



The February program was presented by Mr. Richard Karschner. He shared slides, music, and artifacts from Willow Park.



After the March program about architect Milton Bean, speaker Leopoldo Montoya and member Herb Levy talked about their common interest in architecture.

Pickering Field - Ambler

by Frank Russo, Jr.

In the 18th Century, the property occupied by today's Pickering Field - Home of Ambler baseball - was a part of the Burk family tract. The track extended all the way from Burk's Mill on Morris Road and the Wissahickon Creek almost to Bethlehem Pike. Church Street was laid out through the tract to connect Bethlehem Pike to Morris Road.

In the 19th Century, the property was part of a 30 acre tract developed at mid-century. From 1870 to 1877 the field was a part of the fairgrounds of the Montgomery County Agricultural Society. A yearly fair held there exhibited the best in agriculture and livestock from the area. The fair was well attended until 1876, and receipts for a single day numbered over 10,000 people in attendance.

The land that is now known as Pickering Field was at the very center of a horse race track at the fairgrounds. A clubhouse and restaurants, as well as, grandstands served guests at the track.

At the time the Ambler Railroad Station was located at the terminus of Orange Avenue, and the entrance gates were located nearby. Extra cars had to be added to trains to accommodate guests to the fair. The Ambler Park Hotel was built on Butler Avenue to house the fair's visitors. The entire tract was surrounded by a whitewashed board fence.

In 1876, the Centennial Exposition being held in Philadelphia, caused attendance at the Ambler fair to wane. The fair at Ambler was discontinued after a second poor season in 1877.

Some years later the horse race track was purchased from the fairgrounds by John T. Turner and continued to operate. As Turner operated the track, it began to lose money. In 1888, a cyclone destroyed most of the buildings.

Turner sold the property to Dr. Richard V. Mattison. Sometime in the 1930s, Mattison offered the former race track property to Ambler Borough as a recreational park.

The Borough formally took possession of the property in the 1950s and it was named Lindenwold Field. The name was changed to Pickering Field and it continues to serve the Borough as a recreational and athletic field. It was originally surrounded by venerable horse chestnut trees - some of which survive today.



Several youth sports leagues use the Pickering Field as their home field. On most days, the baseball fields, basketball courts and open spaces are filled with local youth and adults. A concession stand is currently under construction at the site.

Recent Donations

- * Cub Scout uniform (shirt, cap, scarf, pants) from 1970s - from **Lee Myers**, Blue Bell
- * AmChem container and AmChem souvenir dictionary - from **Sandra Wilson**, Ambler
- * DVD - *The Genius of Milton Bean* - from **Leopoldo Montoya**
- * china cupboard - from **Frank Russo**
- * second edition of *Wings Field* - from **Charles Bilella**

Accessioning of the collection of materials from the Ambler Library and from the Horst family continues. The materials from the Ambler library contain articles and photos of local interest from the entire 20th century. The Horst collection is made up of items (year books, souvenirs, certificates, and wedding dress) from the 1920s in Ambler that belonged to **Miriam Kathleen Horst** and donated by her son **William**.

Many Thanks

- * to **John Posen**, Blue Bell, for checking and updating our fire extinguishers,
- * to **Russ Bellavance** for moving the tables and saw horses back to the basement,
- * to **Jeff and Audrey Hahn** for taking items to Impact,
- * to **Bellavance** family and the **Croke** family for lending items for the exhibit about Scouting at the Blue Bell library
- * to **Christine Raines** for taking photos for the newsletter and of the quilt collection.

Mark Your Calendar

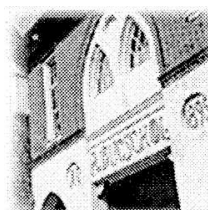
April 9 - Monthly Meeting - Program: Lt. Edwin Fretz, Civil War Soldier - at the 1895 Schoolhouse - 7:30 p.m.

April 15 - Pancake Breakfast - Prophecy Creek Manor House, 7:30 - 11 a.m.

April 15 - Open House - 1895 Schoolhouse - 1 to 4 p.m.

April 23 - Board Meeting - 7:30 p.m.

May 5 - Attic Sale - The Historical Society of Whitpain - Boxwood - 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.



Wissahickon Valley Historical Society
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