



Wissahickon Valley

*historical society*

Ambler  
Lower Gwynedd  
Whitpain

[www.wvalleyhs.org](http://www.wvalleyhs.org)

P.O. Box 96, Ambler, PA 19002

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Feb. 2016

**February 8 Meeting  
at the Wissahickon Valley Public Library -  
Blue Bell  
650 Skippack Pike**



**Medicine in Ancient Egypt**

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Explore the Ancient Egyptian medical world through intriguing evidence uncovered in archaeology excavation. Presented by Stephen R. Phillips, PhD.

Egyptian Section - University of  
Pennsylvania Museum of  
Archaeology and Anthropology

Program at 7:30 p.m.

A joint program with the library.

**Important notice for members: A membership meeting will begin at 7 p.m. to hear details of Whitpain Township's proposals for the 1895 Building. Please plan to come at 7 p.m. See the article by President Russ Bellavance on page 2 for details of the proposals and for the need for membership involvement.**

## From the President's Desk

Please make every effort to attend the February meeting on Monday, February 8 at **7:00 p.m.** at the Blue Bell branch of the Wissahickon Valley Public Library. Please note the time - which will be 30 minutes earlier than our usual starting time - so that we may have a special business meeting before the program.

On behalf of your board, I will be making a presentation of the Society's priorities for repairs, upgrades, and improvements to the 1895 SchoolHouse. At the end of the presentation, we will be asking the members to vote in favor of the list as embodying the priorities of the Society.

We will then continue to move forward with Whitpain Township who owns the property, working closely with them to ensure that the building will continue to be the historic gem that we love.

Your board has been most grateful to Whitpain Township for all the work that has already taken place and for paying for the engineering study that forms the basis for our priority list. It is a prime example of the benefits that can occur when local officials partner with local non-profits such as us.

I hope to see you on the 8th and look forward to telling you more about what has been happening and our plans for the future.



## WVHS Visits Blue Bell Elementary

The "What Was School Like 100 Years Ago" display was recently moved from the Shady Grove Elementary library to the Blue Bell Elementary library. This year will see the Blue Bell Elementary community celebrating its 60th anniversary. Joyce Keller is heading up the effort and has been sharing her finds with us as well as seeking information of the early days of the Blue Bell school.



WVHS member Dot MacDermott was a teacher at Blue Bell in its early days, and Emmy Simon's children were students there. They are sharing memorabilia and memories. If you had contact with Blue Bell in its early days, please consider sharing your information. Please call Peg at 215-542-7753 and she will put you in contact with Joyce.

## Follow up on Glass Collection

Last month the newsletter included a couple of photos of a collection of artifacts - largely glass bottles - that were donated by Kevin B. McLemore who grew up on Susquehanna near the intersection with Butler Pike (Puff's Corner). As a boy, Kevin explored the woods behind what is now Upper Dublin Lutheran Church and imagined Revolutionary War soldiers camped there. He discovered a set of depressions and when he started to dig he found what he thinks was a family dumping place. He has written up a full description of his adventures which is attached to the collection of artifacts.

He wrote "*As an inquisitive boy I began to dig and quickly found artifacts near the surface and even more as I dug deeper into the soft earth. What I found were items from around the turn of the century (1880-1910) - among them clay pipes, pocket knives, large bones (beef?), jewelry, clock parts, lice combs, and even a few undischarged cartridge-type bullets - though their brass casings had long since corroded.*

*Mostly, though, I found glass bottles - hundreds of them, of all shapes and colors. Among them were many which were still intact and bore writing that told the story of what might have been in the average home in the early 1900s. I found a great many whiskey bottles, along with several beer bottles with their white porcelain bail-tops located not far away (some from Norristown's 'Adam Scheidt Brewing Company' and others from 'Roehm' Brewing Company in Philadelphia which operated from 1888-1903. I also found a great many bottles for patent medicines and several from Ambler-area companies such as Stillwagon's Drug Store (9 Main St.) Joseph S. Angeny's Apothecary (aka "The Sunnyside Drug Store") located at Butler and Main St.), and "Bromo Caffeine" made by Keasbey & Mattison of Ambler. One might imagine that the depositor's drinking of so much whiskey and beer had lead to a great many ailments! I also found bottles from common household products - "Hires root Beer" concentrate, quite a few white glass containers from the "Larkin Company" many of which still had their stamped-aluminum screw-on lids barely still in place, "3-in-1" lubricating oil, "Heinz" ketchup, and even one embossed with the name "Madame Oakola's Egyptian Liniment" - whatever that was!"*

Kevin's extensive collection has been cleaned and researched by Emmy Simon. Both Kevin and Emmy used the internet in their studies. Joan Duxbury has made labels for many of the artifacts and they will be on display in our museum's new downstairs display. A visitor can read Kevin's complete story which is part of the display. Kevin has also shared his adventures with the Scouts that he leads.

A recent issue of Ambler - Hometown News contained fact about glass: Glass almost never wears out. It takes about one million years for a glass bottle to break down in a landfill. There are certainly more glass bottles out there for us all to look for.

Thanks to Kevin for donating his collection. Thanks to Emmy and Joan for preparing it for the museum. Check it out.





## Several Issues to Watch

The future of several important buildings in Ambler is of concern. There are still uncertainties about the development of Lindenwold Estate (St. Mary's Estate). The Mary Ambler home's future is also in question. The WVHS board will be discussing these important local sites.

Another Ambler issue is the proposed purchase by the public of one lot along the creek along Edgewood Drive. Keeping the lot undeveloped will help prevent erosion along the waterway as well as provide a pocket park for residents. See <https://www.ioby.org/project/edgewood-preserve> for more information.

## Follow ups to Last Month

Last month's newsletter mentioned several changes in our community. The former site of McDonalds in Ambler is now smooth and snow covered without a trace of its former occupant. A newsletter reader asked what was there before McDonalds. It housed a band pavilion that was built by Richard V. Mattison. The various locations for the Wissahickon Valley Library was also listed in the newsletter. Did you know that its current site on Skippack Pike near Penllyn-Blue Bell was a roller rink into the 1990s? Neighbors' complaints about the noise and ownership issues made it available for purchase. Several WVHS members were involved in obtaining the building for the community.



## Mark Your Calendar

**Wednesday, February 3** - WVHS board meeting, 7:30 p.m.

**Monday, February 8** - WVHS monthly meeting - important business meeting at 7 p.m.,  
Program at 7:30 p.m. - Wissahickon Valley Public Library, Blue Bell

**Monday, March 14** - WVHS monthly meeting - Program: Railroading on the North Penn  
- 1895 Schoolhouse, 7:30 p.m.



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