



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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## Happy New Years!

There is no meeting scheduled for January, but the 1895 Schoolhouse is open each Thursday morning from 10 to 12. The heat is on, and there are always things to do.

## Next Meeting - February 10 at the BlueBell library on Skippack Pike at 7:30 p.m.

The program will be about the **Gems and Minerals of Mont. Co.** and how they have influenced its history. For example, Oreland earned its name because of its iron ore deposits and the mine pit remains (now filled with water.)

What unusual use was this quarry pit put to?

Did you know that garnets are  
readily found along the  
Wissahickon Creek?

What minerals did the Native  
Americans use?

**Jim Johnston** will present the  
program.





## WVHS -2013 Highlights

**For the Society:** **Krista Lewis** has helped us begin the job of digitizing our collection. The result will make it much easier to search our resources and to help researchers. As part of the process, we are taking photos of each item as well as checking for any maintenance needs.

The stone wall in front of the 1895 building was repaired in 2013. It looks great and is much safer. Thanks to **Whitpain Township** - especially **Joe Cione** - for this work.

WHS student **Erin Annunciato** completed a study of the history of Penllyn as her senior project. The next step will be to apply for an historic marker for the village.

There were numerous donations to our collection this year from members **Joe Schneider, Peg Diorio, Bob Whittock, Jean and Russ Bellavance, Nina Martino, Emmy Simon, Gary Fuess, and LLOYD Conard.**

**For the communities of Ambler, Lower Gwynedd, and Whitpain:**

The Skippack Pike house that was rehabbed by Meitner Homes looks wonderful and is "sale pending".

**Blue Bell Inn's** extensive improvements are being carefully done. The hotel in Ambler (which was damaged when a wall collapsed last year) has been repaired and reopened as **Thirty-Four East Tavern**. Several local graveyards have been cleaned (see below).

The historic **Beaumont House** in Lower Gwynedd (built in 1817) that now belongs to **Foulkeways**



at Gwynedd Continuing Retirement Community and had to be moved when 202 was rerouted has been tastefully expanded and is now open as a guest house for Foulkeways' visitors.

Several of the Victorian era houses along Lindenwold Avenue are being carefully repaired.



Please advise of other neighborhood projects that you have noticed.

## Concerns for 2014

**For the communities of Ambler, Lower Gwynedd, and Whitpain:** Perhaps the main concern is the future of Dr. Mattison home/St. Mary's castle on Bethlehem Pike. The estate is part of the larger story of the history of Ambler and the possibility of developing

an historic district. Please check with WVHS member **MaryLou McFarland** for updates on meetings, etc.

Lower Gwynedd officials have approved the construction of a gas station at the five points corner. Some have expressed concerns about congestion at this historic corner.

**For the Society:** We look forward to continued cooperation with other community groups - the **Historical Society of Whitpain, SpringHouse Questers, Blue Bell Elementary School, the Senior Center in Ambler, and the Wissahickon Public Library.**

The Society hopes to attract more new members. Please consider bringing a friend or neighbor to a meeting.

A librarian is needed - especially as the library is updated by **Walker Smith** as his Eagle Scout project. The position of secretary is also open.

## Book Review by Peg Johnston

Over the holidays, I read **One Summer - America, 1927** by Bill Bryson. Written in a chatty style, the book tells the story of a pivotal year in the 20th century through some familiar stories - including Lindberg's flight across the Atlantic, Babe Ruth's record year with the Yankees, the Sacco/Vanzetti trial.

This is an easy read, but I learned a lot. For example, I remember learning about the Tea-pot Dome scandal in high school history, but I didn't remember the what, how, and why. Bryson includes a full bibliography and references.

**Gloria Meyer** and I were talking last fall about how we'd like referrals to good history books. Please consider writing a short review of a book you would recommend. It can be a new one or an old favorite. Some of the best history books that I have read recently are young adult books. For example, **Fever 1793** by Laurie Halse Anderson. It is about a yellow fever outbreak in Philadelphia and includes references to Gwynedd and the summer estates that were commonly owned by wealthy Philadelphians as a way to escape the summer outbreaks.

## The Burial Ground on Penllyn-Blue Bell Pike

**Ginny Sinn** recently asked about the burial ground located next to Prophecy Cottage on Penllyn-Blue Bell Pike. She noticed it for the first time after it had been mowed and tidied. A little research revealed that it belonged to a small group of Friends who meet in Prophecy Cottage after breaking off from Gwynedd Friends in 1827. The split revolved around those who followed a more conservative, Scripture based religion and those who were following Elias Hicks who believed in the individual's ability to directly communicate with his/her God. They met there for 40 years. The burial ground (sign posted as Penllyn Friends Burial Ground) has been maintained by Gwynedd Friends since the last of the Prophecy Friends group died. The Prophecy Cottage is now a private home.



## **Mark Your Calendars**

**January 13** - Board meeting, 7:30 at the Bellavance's

**January 14** - "Meet the Wentz Family" at Wissahickon Valley Public Library, 7 p.m.

**January 21** - Meeting of the Historical Society of Fort Washington

**January 27** - The American Revolution Round Table of Philadelphia meeting at MaGerk's Pub and Grill in Fort Washington, 7:15 p.m. For more information call Bill Ochester at 215-601-7051

**February 10** - WVHS Meeting at Wissahickon Valley Public Library, 7:30 p.m. Program: Gems and Minerals of Montgomery County.

## **Special Thanks**

Thanks to member Bob Whittock who dealt with the 1895 Schoolhouse's furnace problems in December. He worked with the crew from Moyer's to, first, service and then repair our ancient furnace.....just days before the deep freeze arrived.

Thanks to MaryLou McFarland for the membership booklets which were mailed in December. If you didn't receive one, please call 215-646-6541. Dues, gift memberships, and donations are always welcome.



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