



Wissahickon Valley

historical society

Ambler
Lower Gwynedd
Whitpain

www.wvalleyhs.org

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Flea Market Plans

This is our biggest fund raiser of the year.
Saturday, Oct. 12 from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Rain date: Oct. 13

At the 1895 Schoolhouse
799 Skippack Pike

Booths available: \$20 outside space
The WVHS will sponsor food concessions inside the
building.

The Society will not be collecting and selling items this
year, but volunteers are needed for a membership table,
food table, and museum tours as well as set-up.

Contact Audrey Hahn for a booth - 267-421-5019
If you know or see a vendor who might complement our
sale, please share the above information with him/her

Happy 125th Birthday, Ambler!

from Ambler Gazette, week of Sunday, June 23, 2013

by Bernadette Dougherty

On June 16, 1888, our little town of Ambler was incorporated as a borough. That was a big deal back then and I want to recognize it today June 16, 2013. We are 125 years old and as the saying goes, "we've come a long way, baby."

In the early days, we had recycled oak bark (from the Faust Tannery) "boardwalks" for sidewalks along Butler Avenue. We had trolley tracks down the middle of Butler Avenue taking folks up to Allentown and down to Flourtown. For the most part we had homes not businesses along Butler Avenue with North Main Street as our business district, with a Chinese laundry, a hardware store, a drug store and even the fire department.

Back in the day, Dr. Mattison ruled the roost by operating the world's largest asbestos manufacturing plant (Keasbey and Mattison), the Ambler Spring Water Co., and the Ambler Electric Light Co., building and owning 400 homes for his employees and he himself living in a castle on Bethlehem Pike, Ambler was the epitome of a company town.

Through the '40s and '50s, Ambler's downtown became more retail-driven until the word "mall" entered our vocabularies. That changed Ambler's direction quickly to a professional and service-oriented business district. And now today there is a blend of food, entertainment, retail, professional and service businesses, ergo our tagline - "Daytime, night-time...any time Ambler".

Ambler's downtown is very fortunate to still have so many of its original structures in place and repurposed them (aka adaptive reuse). Look at the Ambler Theater, threatened for years to be demolished for a parking lot, now a three-screen vibrant art and independent movie theater, Dettera's feed store now Dettera restaurant and wine bar, the First National Bank of Ambler now Kimmel and Silverman, and Wyndham Hotel now 34 East Tavern, Doc Evan Ambler's store now Bridget's Steakhouse, the old outbound train station now Choo-Choo's/ Bussinger Trains, and the K&M boiler house now the Ambler Boiler House. And still waiting patiently for reuse is the old Ambler Gazette building on Butler Avenue. In Ambler, we have the tradition of building on what came before instead of destroying the past for the sake of "progress". Bigger and newer is not always better.

Because of strong and passionate individuals, sound leadership, and careful planning throughout the years, the town of Ambler has made it to its 125th birthday basically intact structurally. And because of continuing to reinvent itself, Ambler has made it economically, culturally, and socially as well. Ambler's future is bright because of its people, partnerships, and persistence.

So happy Happy Birthday, Ambler. For 125 years you weathered the storms of economic downturns and major weather events and you have come out on top. You are a shining star in Montgomery County's crown!

Borough Considers Use for Mattison Avenue Building

The Wissahickon School District formally closed the Mattison Avenue Elementary School at the end of the school year. The School Board approved an agreement between the Borough and the School District to negotiate exclusively for a period of 90 days the potential acquisition of the school building at their June 24th meeting.

The Borough is considering the building as a new borough hall and/or as a recreation center for the community. Of course, the current borough building's future is also under consideration. Input from the community is sought. Some comments can be found on the Ambler Gazette's Facebook page.

Conard Family Holds Reunion

On June 15th, the Conard family reunion was held at the Hatboro Friends Meeting House. Our Society has deep connections with the Conard family. Henry and Dorothy Conard were founding members of our Society and our library is named in honor of Henry. They lived in The Cloot, located where Penllyn-BlueBell meets Stenton, which they bought in the 1970s.

Ironically, The Cloot had been build by Henry's ancestors, Henry and Catherine Conard, in the 1750s. The house is currently unoccupied though the barn has been converted to housing and it being well taken care of.

Descendants of the seven children of Henry and Catherine Conard have an active society and meet each year with up to a hundred people attending.

We have in our collection a number of items donated over the year by the family and Society members. These include several quilts, a Civil War bullet, and several products of the Conard iron works which was located in Fort Washington along the Sandy Run Creek. We also hold in trust a tea set, spoons, and a set of cups and saucers. Each years these items are displayed at the reunion.

At the June meeting, Lloyd Conard presented a talk about the iron items - especially the augers - produced by the Conard iron works in Fort Washington.



An auger is a tool used to create holes - in wood, in ice (for ice fishing as well as harvesting ice). Matching holes in wood construction are then filled with a peg - holding the joint together. The Conard

iron works made auger of many sizes. They also made bits for drills, ice tongs, and planes. Conard augers and bits are valued for their quality and were displayed at the



Centennial Fair in Philadelphia. The iron works was located across Bethlehem Pike from Clifton House, the home of the Fort Washington Historical Society. It took power from the Sandy Run Creek - probably with a underground water turbine. (Information from a talk by Lloyd Conard.)

The horse shed at the Hatboro Friends Meeting was constructed with wooden peg joints. The above close up is from the shed.

Dotty Wiler, Doylestown, poses with the Conard quilt that she coordinated for the 75th Reunion. The quilt is in our collection.



Thanks again to the Myers

A small but enthusiastic group braved a June rain storm and enjoyed the annual June pot luck by the Myers home in Fort Washington. Lots of tasty appetizers and side dishes complemented the pulled pork provided by the Myers. An array of desserts were available during the corn auction. It was a lovely evening for all. Thanks to Bob and Gloria.

Additions to the Library

Favorites from our Table, a recipe book from the Centre Square Fire Company Ladies Auxiliary - to celebrate the company's 100th Anniversary

Thones Kunders - John and Sarah Conard - a Conard family genealogy

Open House at the Schoolhouse -

Sunday, July 21 - 1 to 4 p.m.

On a Lighter Side

If you are looking for a local field trip this summer, consider The Stoogeum in Springhouse. Open every Thursday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., the museum celebrates the 3 Stooges - known as the High Priests of Low Comedy and the Sultans of Slapstick. The trio made numerous short features as well as feature length films. The creation of Gary Lassin, the museum contains artifacts - including posters, costumes, photos, and documents. Lassin is also has many stories to tell about the Stooges. Admission is \$10 for adults, \$8 for students and senior citizens, and is free for children 12 and under.



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