

Wissahickon Valley

historical society

Ambler
Lower Gwynedd
Whitpain

www.wvalleyhs.com

info@wvalleyhs.org

P.O. Box 96, Ambler, PA 19002-0096

215-646-6541

Volume 14, Issue 8

March 2013

Join us on Monday, March 11
at 7:30 p.m.
at the 1895 Schoolhouse



Program:
**Deck's
Hardware - An
Ambler
Institution**
presented by
Dawson Deck

First opened on Main Street in 1908, Deck's is a family run business that serves Ambler and surrounding communities. A True-Value Hardware, it advertises that you can "buy by piece or pound instead of blister pack." It has witnessed lots of changes in hardware and building needs over the years and always has good, up-to-date advice for projects.

Light refreshments will be served after the program.



Wissahickon Valley Historical Society
Serving Lower Gwynedd, Whitpain and Ambler communities
Volume 14, Issue 8

Membership News - from MaryLou McFarland

We would like to acknowledge the members who have donated above the usual membership levels. Special thanks to: Mark Ashton, Russ and Jean Bellavance, the Croke family (Johnson & Johnson Matching grant), Herman and Monica Ehret, Emlen Evans, Jim and Peg Johnston, Herb Levy, Emmy Simon, Frank Russo and Abe Addonizio, Bob and Mabel Whittock, and William and Bette Young.

Thanks

Welcome to new member Mari Bernhagen.

Remembering Tad Mahan

by Russ Bellavance

We are sorry to report that Tad Mahan, a long time member and officer of the Society, died at the end of January. Tad was vice-president during one of the first times I was president (in the early 1980s). We remember Tad as that tall, handsome man who always had a smile on his face, and who very much enjoyed the social aspects of our Society. Tad and Lei Barry would open their beautiful old home on Penllyn-Blue Bell Pike for various Society functions. I particularly remember one of the June picnic meetings in their back yard - an ideal setting and two ideal hosts. I also remember Tad as an astute businessman, a proud dad (and grand-dad) and as an active fundraiser for community non-profits. Until his health failed, he was also a regular figure at the Y, working out while wearing oversized headphones, greeting Jeannie and me with a warm smile.

Condolences

Our condolences to Russ and Jeannie Bellavance on the loss of Russ' sister, Diane Tacchino. Often siblings know us for more of our lives than anyone else and share many experiences and memories.

Quester Fund Raising Program

SpringHouse Questers invite our members to a special get-together on Monday, February 25th at 7 p.m. at the SpringHouse Estates Auditorium on Norristown Rd. The program is The History of Flags. A donation of \$2 per person. (If you would like a ride, please call Peg at 215-542-7753.)

SpringHouse Questers have given excellent support to our efforts. They have given us grants for new shades for the museum, the rehab of the stained glass panel from the Mattison mansion, and archival supplies for our collection.



Skippack Pike Mile Markers

We recently received via e-mail a question about the mile markers along Skippack Pike. *Whitpain Township - Three Hundred Years* includes an interesting article about the mile markers:



“According to Fred Perry Powers’ *Milestones and Highways* around Philadelphia, colonial highways leading out of Philadelphia were all measured ‘from the so-called Golden Milestone, at the old Court House at Front and High Streets.’ The Philadelphia Contributionship for Insuring Houses from Loss by Fire laid out and paid for the first milestones in 1764. Milestones were of great help in keeping the post riders up to their schedules. Benjamin Franklin, deputy postmaster at this time, appreciated the value of milestones in expediting the postal service. Throughout most of the eighteenth century the counties above Philadelphia, including Whitpain, were sparsely populated, with great distances between houses. Mr. Powers states in his book, ‘in sending and receiving letters and in public documents the milestone nearest the dwelling was mentioned.’ When George Washington had his headquarters at Dawesfield during the Whitpain encampment, for example, he headed his letters, ‘Skippack Pike, 15th milestone.’ Ironically, the 16th milestone at the present Farview Farm is closer to Dawesfield.

In the 1960s, milestone 19 was found to have been moved when Skippack Pike was widened. In 1977 Mr. Robert Dibble facilitated the return of the milestone to its proper place just above St. John’s Lutheran Church.

Other milestones within our area include milestone 15 - just below Butler Pike, milestone 17 - in front of Blue Bell School playground, milestone 18 - at Centre Square Fire Co. There is also a milestone 18 just below Cathcart Rd. on Morris Road.

Photos in *Whitpain: Crossroads in Time - 1977* show the individual markers painted white and carvings highlighted in black paint.

Above: The marker at the Centre Square fire station has been carefully maintained.

Right: The marker near the Blue Bell School playground and not far from the 1895 Schoolhouse needs attention. This might make an interesting project for students and historical society members.

The marker at mile 16 is not visible from the road and may be missing.



Wissahickon Valley Public Library / Blue Bell

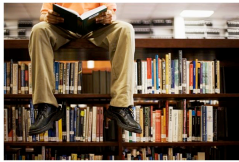
READ-A-THON / TELETHON

Saturday March 9, 2013
9 AM – 9 PM

Join your neighbors and spend some quiet time
reading at your local library!

Bring your own comfy seating if you wish;
Bean-bag chair, blanket or chair.

Community leaders and authors will be reading aloud
in the community room.
(The schedule will be available beforehand.)
Children's story time starts on the **odd hours**
and adults on the **even hours**.



We will have a raffle pull for prizes!
Refreshments will be available

Local Library Event

The Read-a-thon sounds like a fun event for all.

The Blue Bell library hosts our group several times a year, and, in March, the WVHS is providing the exhibit in their showcase. Stop by and check out our A,B,C exhibit which features books, blocks, puzzles, etc. from across the past 100 years.

In May, the library will host our monthly meeting. The program is The Martino Art Legacy presented by local artist Nina F. Martino. Art work by the Martino family will be the theme of the library's showcase in May.

Recent Donations

The Conservancy of Montgomery County is joining efforts with the Heritage Conservancy in Doylestown. In the process, files are being purged, and we have accepted items that correspond with our mission statement.

These items include a set of black and white photos the Lindenwold (St. Mary's) from the 1910-1920s. The photos were taken both inside and outside of the mansion and include a few with Dr. Mattison himself.

There is also a large set of blueprints for Normandy Farm buildings and related documents from the early 20th century which complement our already large collection about Normandy Farm. There are also files about Ambler Main Street projects and the proposed Ambler high rise of 2005.



Mark Your Calendar

March 11 - WVHS monthly meeting - 7:30 p.m. at the 1895 Schoolhouse

March 17 - Open House - 1895 Schoolhouse - 1 to 4 p.m.

March 25 - WVHS Board meeting - 7:30 p.m.

March 26 - Historical Society of Whitpain meeting - program "Pastors and Patriots: the Muhlenberg Family of Pennsylvania" - presenter: Lisa Minardi, Winterthur

The 1895 Schoolhouse is open Thursday mornings from 10 to noon to members and guests.



During March, check out our display at the Wissahickon Valley Library - Blue Bell branch. It features items used over the years to help children learn their ABCs. Items are from our museum collections as well as from members' collections.



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