



Wissahickon Valley

historical society

Ambler
Lower Gwynedd
Whitpain

www.wvalleyhs.org

215-646-6541

P.O. Box 96, Ambler, PA 19002

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March 2014

Welcome Spring at the
March meeting
at the 1895 Schoolhouse.

The heat will be on - just in case.

We also have a few new, more comfortable chairs.

Program: The History and Future of
Ambler Savings Bank
presented by Martin R. Brown,
President and CEO

Ambler Savings Bank is celebrating its 140th anniversary in Ambler. It is one of the oldest mutual banks in Pennsylvania, and it has been a major supporter of the rejuvenation of Ambler through its support of local organizations (including WVHS) and initiatives. Mr. Brown has been with the bank for 40 years.

March 10 at 7:30 p.m.
at the 1895 Schoolhouse on Skippack Pike

Followed by light refreshments.

Update on the Merge with Historical Society of Whitpain

President **Russ Bellavance** shared recent activity as the WVHS and the HSW discuss and work towards a merger at a recent board meeting. Russ has met a couple of times with **Maria Goldkamp**, president of HSW. At the February general meeting, Russ announced that the WVHS will vote on the merge at its March 10 general meeting. The HSW intends to vote at their March 25th meeting.

WVHS member **Mark Ashton**, who went through a similar merge at the Yellow Spring Historical Society, has offered valuable advice.

The Historical Society of Whitpain has managed and cared for both the Franklinville School on Morris Road and the Boxwood house on Skippack Pike. Both groups agree that it would be impossible to continue responsibly care for three buildings. Since the Franklinville Schoolhouse complements the WVHS's mission statement and its current 1895 Schoolhouse, the future of Boxwood house is a concern.

Marie and Russ had an excellent meeting with Whitpain Township Manager Roman Pronczak and four other Whitpain officials about the lease held by HSW on Boxwood. The township official understood and, subject to the approval of the Supervisors, are ready to terminate the lease at our convenience. They also recognize the importance of preserving Boxwood House and possible uses were discussed.

Boxwood, 1098 Skippack Pike across from Cathcart Rd., was built in 1730's or 1740'. According to an article by WVHS member in Crossroads in Time by WVHS member **Bonnie Schmidt**, it probably began as a one-room cabin with a spiral staircase to a cellar and a permanent ladder to a loft. It was held by the Wood family from the mid-1700's until 1864. (Early maps show what is now Cathcart Rd. as Wood Rd.)

After a series of owners, it was purchased by Charles and Margaret Olson who lovingly renovated it. When the site was absorbed by Whitpain Township, WHS leased it for its head-quarters. Thanks to Whitpain Township for seeking alternative uses for Boxwood.

Please feel free to share questions and/or concerns with

any board member. There can also be time for questions before the vote at the March 10th meeting.



Member Updates

A few members still owe dues for the 2013-2014 period. Please forward to:

MaryLou McFarland

500 Trinity Place

Ambler, PA 19002-5836

The 1895 Schoolhouse is open Thursday from 10 to noon for research and for work on the collection. Members are welcome to join us any Thursday to help catalogue artifacts and books. There are both long term and short term jobs that always seem to turn up something of interest.

Thanks to **John Simon, Bob Whittock**, and Moyer's for keeping the 1895 building safe and warm this winter. We used more oil than usual, but the pipes, buildings, and collections are safe. We keep the building at 45 degrees when no one is in the building; the water was turned off to the first floor.

Bob is in the process of exploring a lock-box set-up for the building so that emergency workers could enter the building as needed and could contact a member if needed.

Your newsletter needs member participation. Please consider sharing reviews of books, visits to local attractions, trips to far away places, remembrances of local events and characters for inclusion in this newsletter. Articles can be e-mailed to pegathome6@yahoo.com or mailed to Peg Johnston.

Stories and Photos

Fort Washington resident Dave Martin recently brought in some slides of the original Shady Grove and the Mount Pleasant church. We are going to try transferring them to photographs that can be preserved on DVDs with a gadget that has been lent to us. Keeping up with changing technology is a challenge! Watch for these photos in the April newsletter.

Mr. Martin also shared a few remembrances of the area. He described visits to the site of White City Park - near the bend of Bethlehem Pike where one now finds the Rittenhouse Lumber Company and Hillcrest Pond. He also remembered the little shed at the railroad crossing on Butler Pike in Ambler. The shed housed a man who monitored pedestrian crossing the tracks.

Stories and photos that record our history are important - to share with young people but also to bring back memories.

Questers and Scouts Work Together

To the right, **Walker Smith** and **Grace Renz** study our tool collection. Walker will be building a show case for the tools as a part of his Eagle Scout project. Grace is grants chairperson for the **Springhouse Questers** who has offered to help fund part of Walker's work which includes the showcase as well as wooden and metal bookcases. He will also be helping hang the library shades - another Quester sponsored project. The windows in the library will be scraped and recaulked.



Mark Your Calendar

March 8 - School of the Soldier - experience camp life common during the long winter encampment of the Revolutionary War. Peter Wentz Farmstead, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

March 10 - WVHS monthly meeting at the Schoolhouse, 7:30 p.m., Details on page 1.

March 16 - 1895 Schoolhouse Open House - 1 to 4 p.m.

March 24 - Lecture - The Leni Lenape of our Area - Boomer U. at the Senior Center (Forest Avenue School) - 7 p.m. - Call 215-619-8863 for info.

April 14 - WVHS monthly meeting at the Schoolhouse, 7:30 p.m. Program: The Role the Northern Suburban Philadelphia Area Played in the Grand Scheme of the American Revolution - Presenter: **James Magaziner, WVH member**



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