



www.wvalleyhs.org
215-646-6541

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August 2019
Box 96, Ambler, PA 19002

After a busy summer, there will not be an
Open House in August.
Please use above contacts
if you have any questions or need to reach the society.

The first meeting of the year will be September 9
at the 1895 Schoolhouse.
The program will be the traditional
Member Show and Tell. Please bring an item with a
short story or question to share.

September Open Houses will be on
Sunday the 15th.
at both the 1895
Schoolhouse
and the
Franklinville
Schoolhouse.



Please watch for 2019/2020 membership information.

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A Found Item Teaches Several Lessons

One of the joys of working with the society's collections in finding unexpected treasures. Recently a pamphlet entitled "Father dealt in coves - The Harvey Dager Story" turned up with other Lower Gwynedd materials. Originally printed in 1955, it includes an explanatory note by Philip M. Allen. It, of course, helps explain the origin of the naming of Dager Road which leads past Wissahickon High School and T's into Penllyn-Blue Bell Pike. It also reveals a real local character and the challenges of transcribing casual text.

The following excerpt demonstrates all of the above characteristics.

"I remember when ther was a old tool gate wright above the old Hotel I thin it was run by a man be the name of Rapp. We had a tool gate on the Bethlehem pike just below ower farm it was run by a man by the name of Mr Walt. When my father left to go out west I had to drive him down to the station he use to want to go the back way to save tool, so when he was going down through the farm he would tell me to pull the weeds and fix the fence or fix the road in good shape. well he would see about a hundred diffent things to do so I said to him how long are you going to gones this trip, he sed I be back the last of the week. well he give enough work for a month so said dad us go down the pike I pay the tols I think we will make better time, but it was hard to get hie to change is mind."

Text like this are full of history and often tells of seasonal work and the weather. On the other hand, it is sometimes a struggle to transcribe it. We have several local journals from the early 20th in our collection that we would love to have transcribed. One of our summer student volunteers, Connor Waite, is working on the handwritten Haywood diary from the 1880s. Very instructive but slow going! If you would find it interesting to work on this project, let us know.

A Treasure in the Community

A evening stroll down Butler Pike - especially with an ice cream in hand - is becoming a summer tradition. There are several new restaurants and shops in addition to a exhibit space at "Art in the Storefront" which features local artists. Most of the other buildings as well have had various reincarnations. In many cases community members of the past took care to preserve the stories.

One of special interest involved the former Wissahickon Fire Company and Town Hall on Butler Pike - across from the theater - see right. The building was designed by architect Watson K. Phillips and dedicated on November 3, 1917. (The town's first fire station was located on North Main Street.) The fire company remained at the Butler Avenue location until it outgrew the quarters and moved to the current firehouse on Race Sheet in 1958.



The Butler Pike building had a frieze above the triple-arched windows (see right - above windows). The frieze was made of Moravian tiles handmade in 1917 at the Moravian Tile Works in Doylestown and was saved when the building was demolished in 1962. The tiles were carefully removed, reassembled, and mounted in what was then the Lapetina's Furniture Store - later Regan's Shoe Store. Both stores closed but the frieze can be seen inside the "Home by Kristen" shop at 72 Butler Pike (see left). She has graciously invited visitors to stop in to see the frieze. It depicts scenes of the early days of volunteer firefighting - including a horse-drawn steam pump.

Recent Additions to our Collection

from Peg Krengle, WVHS member - a school hand-bell and two books (*Paradise Lost* and *Dick's Encyclopedia of Practical Receipts and Processes or How They did it in the 1870s*)

from Ann Donaldson, WVHS member - Ambler High School yearbook from 1941, Ambler High School class ring from 1947, a set of coasters from the 50th reunion of the class of 1947, Ann's first grade report card from SpringHouse Elementary dated 1936. Ann shared some of her memories of growing up on Brushtown Road in Lower Gwynedd. Girls' sports included basketball, field hockey, and newly introduced lacrosse. Bess Lightkemp was the coach. Ann went on to Temple University main campus. The Ambler campus was not open at that time.



from Mary Maxion - a framed certificate (dated Jan. 26, 1949) to Steven Stajanov recognizing 25 years of service to Keasbey & Mattison.

Mary shared that the Stajanov family came to live in West Ambler and then moved to North Spring Garden Street. They paid \$13,000 for their house. Steven's son Emil served in WWII and died in 2008. The family shared the certificate with Mary.

Thanks, to Peg, Ann, and Mary for enriching our collection.

A Quilt Mystery

The WVHS recently received an e-mail from Ellen Heath, an Easton librarian, who described a quilt that was brought to the local quilting group. It is dated 1901 and acknowledges a Social Guild in Blue Bell, Jan.

The info was forwarded to several WVHS members including Fran Treisbach, and we are working to identify what group may have made the quilt. It was found in the basement of a home in Blue Bell and several of almost 100 names are common Whitpain names.

If you recognize the "Social Guild" and/or would like to look at the complete list of names, please call 215-542-7753 (Peg Johnston) and she will share the complete list of names. The officers of the group were Dillman, Schmidt, Yost, and Bersch.



Condolences to the Family of Alma Jacobs

Long time WVHS member and supporter Alma Jacobs passed away in July. She was a strong supporter of many local organizations - especially those that empowered women to empower other women. Alma was certainly a model for involvement in local and state-wide efforts. Perhaps the WVHS's focus on women's empowerment can partly serve to honor Alma's efforts.

Changes to Come

A committee of WVHS members (Bob Bradley, Barry Johnson, Sally Zeller, Joan Duxbury, and Russ Bellavance) have been working this summer to facilitate and update WVHS's communication with its members and the public. At the August board meeting, it was decided to have quarterly newsletters and to communicate with members and the public primarily through the Society's website - www.wvalleyhs.org and Facebook. The September newsletter will be the last monthly one; future newsletters will be published every three months. WVHS is currently seeking a member to take on the newsletter which would be a quarterly job. The jobs of archivist and curator are also available.

The board also decided to have a wine and cheese event in October. Watch for details of this special get-together.



Blue Bell Inn - Then and Now

Member Yen Ho's Photoshopped the familiar corner of Penllyn/BlueBell Pike and Skippack Pike to remind us that the Blue Bell Inn has been there since the 1700s.

In fact, George Washington was said to have taken meals and had meetings there during his stay in the area in 1777.



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