



Wissahickon Valley
historical society

Ambler
Lower Gwynedd
Whitpain

www.wvalleyhs.org

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799 Skippack Pike, Blue Bell

P.O. Box 96, Ambler, PA 19002

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Please join us at the annual Holiday Party
Sunday, Dec. 9, 2018
1 to 4 p.m.
See the progress so far on our major
renovation project.

Enjoy good company, meet some of the many people who have helped make the project a success, and share some sweet and savory treats.

Tea, coffee, and holiday punch will be served.

RSVP to 215-643-5048 or
to bellavance@verizon.net

Please let Jeannie Bellavance know what sweet or savory finger food you are bringing to share. Call and leave a message at 215-643-5048 or e-mail at bellavance@verizon.net



The wreaths and seasonal arrangements outside the 1895 School are thanks to Dot MacDermott. Thanks, Dot

Mark Your Calendar

Saturday, Dec. 1 - Centre Square Fire Co. Holiday craft and vendor fair - 9 to 1

Saturday, **Dec. 1** - Candlelight Tour at Wentz Farmstead - 3 to 9 p.m.

Saturday, **Dec. 1** - Holiday Open House - Farmers' Union Hall, Center Point
Saturday (9:30 to 4) **Dec. 1** and Sunday (12:30 to 4) **Dec. 2** - Christmas Market at both Mennonite Heritage Center, Harleysville and Schwenkfelder Library and Heritage Center.

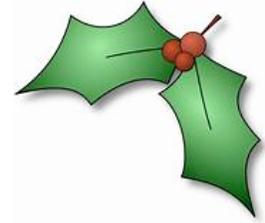
Tuesday, **Dec. 4** - Introduction to Using DNA Testing in Genealogy - Mont. Co. Historical Society - 6:30 p.m. - Call 610-272-0297

Sunday, **Dec. 9** - Holiday party - Wissahickon Valley Historical Society - 1895 Schoolhouse - 1 to 4 p.m.

Sunday, **Dec. 9** - Historical Society of Fort Washington Wassail party for members and guests - 4 to 7 p.m.

Monday, **Jan 14** - Wissahickon Valley Historical Society monthly meeting - 1895 Schoolhouse

Tuesday, **Jan. 15** - Historical Society of Fort Washington - monthly meeting - Philadelphia During WWI by Peter Williams



Special Exhibit at the Montgomery County Historical Society - "Made in Montgomery County" - check web-site for days and hours.



Manderley Farm Preserved as Farmland

At the busy intersection of Morris Road and Penlyn-Blue Bell, it is easy to miss the sign shown at left.

Elsa Walbridge hosted the WVHS for a tour of the property on the southwest corner of the intersection last spring. The sign has been there for awhile; the photo was taken when there was a back up on Morris Road.

It announces that the private farm is permanently preserved through the Farmland Preservation Program with the support of Whitpain Township and Montgomery County. It is good to know that this historic farm will be preserved as a working open space.

Query via E-mail

We recently received an e-mail seeking information about paintings by Frank Boni. He is shown in an Ambler Gazette photo presenting a painting of the former Ambler Post Office to the borough. He also painted the Lower Gwynedd Township Building, the original YMCA, and St. Anthony of Padua of Ambler. If you have any information about Mr. Boni's work, please contact Peg Johnston at pegathome6@yahoo.com. Thank you.

1895 Building Renovations Proceed

After an amazingly busy few months, the 1895 Schoolhouse renovations edge toward completion. This past month painting of the inside of building was completed by Steve Verb, VERCO Painting. Members Joan Duxbury and Sally Zeller have cleaned the floors, library, turret, and woodwork (see sparkling stairs and railings at below!) Of course, they have also been managing the entire renovation project.

New fixtures are in place in the bathroom thanks to plumbers John Luskin Sr. and Jr. This is good news for those who were concerned about the old toilet's flushing quirks. A small hot water heater was installed which will make it easier to keep the schoolhouse and its displays clean. No more ice water coming from faucets to wash your hands during the winter months.

Special thanks to VERC0 Painting for all of the little extras they "just did for us"....repainting electrical fixtures so they would look nice next to his freshly painting ceiling, painting a special waste basket for the library, refinishing the bell on the porch's wood railing, hanging large pictures, installing the wood blinds on the first and second floor but most importantly providing laughs and support to Joan and Sally during the extremely hot summer months working in the Schoolhouse. Thank you Steve and Dom!

John Lee completed some tricky and creative patching of ceiling and walls in the basement and is working on repairing areas of our wood floor. Our new first floor ceiling is John's work of art. Thanks, John.

As mentioned last newsletter, Dean Bender, Dry Basements, installed a French drain in the basement during July. After all the rains there is no rain; it has passed the test. Thanks, Dean.



A large flat screen has been hooked up on the front wall of the first floor by Gil and Scott of GR Electric. It will allow for sharing of short videos as well as still photos. (Content is welcome. This might include interviews, stories behind artifacts, etc., etc.) Gil is also in the process of installing our new lighting.

Thanks to Whitpain Township for providing guidance, instruction, and patience - especially in reading and responding to all of Joan's e-mails. Thanks to Tom Farzetta and Jeff Riley.

An exhibit entitled How This Building Works will be in the new basement museum. Because of the way the building has evolved, most modernizations are easily visible. For example, pipes are exposed. It makes an interesting and fun story. Thanks to Ed Lane and John Simon for checking the facts.

Members Marie Goldkamp, Dot MacDermott, and Jan Zimmerman have been cleaning and polishing the many wooden artifacts before they are returned to storage and/or display. President Russ Bellavance has picked up numerous special assignments as well as being the capital fund's driving force. Member Neal Bradley has been our "go to person" for repairs. His woodworking skills are amazing. The Thursday morning crews' help is greatly appreciated. They will continue their work - setting up and maintaining exhibits and the collections in the new year. New volunteers are always welcome.

At the holiday party, members and visitors will be able to enjoy a preview of renovations and meet some of the many people who have work on them. Many thanks to Joan and Sally for their amazing efforts in coordinating - and often getting actively involved in - the renovations.

Like Us on Facebook

Many thanks to Emma Siegel for developing WVHS's Facebook presence! This will be a great way to reach the "younger generation". Emma explains that there are two ways to go about accessing Facebook. First, if someone already has the Facebook app, they can go to the search bar at the top and type in "Wissahickon Valley Historical Society". The first page to pop up is ours. (continued on next page)

If someone does not have the Facebook app, they can go to Google and type in “Wissahickon Valley Historical Society Facebook” and it should pop right up. Be sure to “like” us.

Please watch for more information about our Facebook connections in the January newsletter. In the mean time, consider giving it a try. Thanks, Emma!

Historic Broad Axe Tavern Listed For Lease

Several sources have noted that the lease on the Broad Axe Tavern is available. The Broad Axe is considered to be the oldest tavern/inn in the area. Whitpain Township lists it’s beginning in 1681. The date “1685” is marked on the building though no records match that date. Deed research listed in the *Whitpain Township - A Tricentennial Reflection - 1701-2001* states that the property accommodated a tavern only back to 1757. Between 1784 and 1975 the Broad Axe Tavern changed hands thirteen times. From 1796 to 1880 the building served as a tavern and had 47 acres of land. From 1880 to 1975 it served as a hotel and had only 3.79 acres.

It has certainly seen a lot of traffic and a lot of history pass by its doors. Hopefully it is secure into the future. Whitpain Township recently commissioned a new turning lane at the Butler Pike and Skippack Pike intersection. Each day about 20,000 vehicles pass through this intersection. This is a true contrast to a Skippack Pike photo from the early 1900s - which show two walkers and no cars. (see right.)

In a response to the announcement of the Ghosts of Evans-Mumbower event in Oct., Sandi Swanger e-mailed about the the ghost who supposedly inhabits the Broad Axe Tavern. “Rachel was the daughter of a former tavern owner from way back - she was chased into the bar by local hoodlums, ran into the bathroom, and never seen again. However, waiters to this day claim to be pushed from behind, have glasses fly across the bar, drinks spilled, etc. Check it out on Google. When they renovated, a construction worker quit after feeling her presence. Drivers have sometimes seen her on the third floor.....” Good thing they have the new turn lane!



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