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July 2019
215-646-6541

Open House

July 21

1 to 3:00 p.m.

Both sites will have activities for children as well as tours.
Thanks to our docents who make
our Open Houses possible.



Both buildings are listed on the
National Registry of Historic Places

Having Fun with Photos

Member Yen Ho, a student of historic preservation, shared some interesting photos of local sites. She used historic photos and set them into current day photographs using Photoshop.

At right, an early 20th century photo of the Waggon Inn (now the “for sale” Reed’s Country Store) has been inserted into a 2019 photo of the Skippack Pike/202 intersection.

Watch for more “across time” photos in the August newsletter. Thanks, Yen.



Mermaid Lake’s Future Under Active Discussion

According to press releases from Whitpain Township, the long rumored sale of Mermaid Lake is a reality. It has been sold to Metropolitan Development Group which has submitted a conditional use application to the township to construct 53 detached single-family homes on the property.

The 65 acre Mermaid Lake property was developed as a swim club, a nine-hole par three golf course, sports courts, and picnic pavilions after the acreage was bought from a branch of the Zimmerman family in the late 1920s. A popular summer day camp has operated on the property for many years. Many local companies and schools have used the site for annual picnics.

According to information from Whitpain Township, it has been and is currently interested in obtaining at least a portion of the property for a public park and sports facilities. Whitpain supervisors will continue to consider “various alternatives to enhance recreational opportunities within the Township - including adding additional ball fields, trails, and playing courts”,

Several existing buildings on the Mermaid Lake property date from the time

when the property was a farm - most notably a house already in existence in 1775 when Christopher Zimmerman made the original purchase and a large stone barn built in 1880 by his sons William, Jacob, and Isaac.

The WVHS has a collection of documents about Mermaid Lakes’ history and development. Any related stories from members are welcome and would be added to our collection. This is also a time when citizens can express their feeling about the development of this historic property to their representative.



Volunteer Opportunities

Thanks to Carol Kalos, Barry Johnson, Glenda and Larry Radine for volunteering to be docents at future Open Houses at the 1895 Schoolhouse. For our June Open House we had three docents - one on each floor. This will be our operating plan for future open houses. New volunteers are always welcome.

Another group of members - Bob Bradley, Joan Duxbury, Barry Johnson, and Sally Zeller (see right) have been working on expanding the society's web-site. We receive regular requests for information and offers of donations through our web-site. We are currently working with someone who is researching local dairies who found us through our current web-site.



One up-coming volunteer opportunity is for an archivist. This person collects and assembles documents - newsletters, e-mails, publications - generated by the society. Emmy Simon has been our archivist for a number of years and has generated a complete record of activities for numerous years. Her binders are an excellent model for a new archivist.

We used the archives recently to find out the names of speakers about Wings Field that we had several years ago. Looking through the archives we were impressed with the evolution of our newsletter. Each editor has created her/his unique newsletter style. Most newsletters include articles by members or guests. The job of newsletter editor will be open starting in September. If you enjoy writing and have some word processing skills, please consider volunteering for this opportunity. Transition help is available. Please contact Peg Johnston at 215-542-7753 if working on the newsletter is of interest.

Lower Gwynedd Historic Home For Sale

Driving up or down Penllyn-Blue Bell Pike through Lower Gwynedd, one is impressed with how many "For Sale" signs are in front of older homes with large lots. One of special note is Orthodox Cottage.



In 1827, the Quakers split into two factions - the Hicksites and the Orthodox. This house was used as a meetinghouse for approximately 40 years by the Orthodox sect. Adjoining the property is a small graveyard that is now under the care of Gwynedd Meeting.

The Orthodox Quakers tended to be more urban and wealthier; the Hicksites tended to be more rural and conservative. The two groups rejoined during the 1860s during the Civil War.

Congratulations to Centre Square Fire Department Volunteers

The Centre Square Fire Department recently presented honors to WVHS members Zayne Brunner (Chief's Attendance Award), Tyler Brunner (Chief Engineer's Award) and Sharon Brunner (Attendance Award). Congratulations.

Many of our members are active in various community organizations. They help Whitpain, Lower Gwynedd, and Ambler work. Thank you all.

Summer Intern

Connor Waite, a 2019 graduate of Wissahickon High School, is lending a hand this summer until he heads off to University of Scranton where he will major in history.

His first task was to research a document that belongs to the society. It relates to the transfer of land in what is now southwestern Pennsylvania from the Iroquois Nation to a company (the Indiana Company) that would sell land to settlers. The land had also been claimed by Virginia during the Revolutionary War.

Connor also helped move boxes from the storage closet on one of the hot days last week. Boxes will be checked for labels, indexes, etc. and returned to the closet in a more organized manner.

It is great to have an extra pair of hands (and a strong back). Thanks, Connor

Recent Donations

We recently received an e-mail at our info@wvalleyhs.org address from Clark Adams in North Carolina. Someone had given him a long-play record entitled *Music Night* by Wissahickon Senior High School - dated May 13, 1964. The band was directed by Mr. Robert L. Stowe and listed a guest conductor as Mr. Luigi Zaninelli. We are looking forward to playing the record. Anyone who might have played in the band is welcome to join us. We'll even schedule a special "concert" for you. Thanks to Mr. Adams for rescuing this record.



In last month's newsletter we described Ambler items donated by Linda Prow Reilly. In addition, she shared family photos and genealogy materials. Her grandparents arrived in Ambler from Italy just after the turn of the 20th century. By mid- 20th century when her grandparents celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary, a family photo shows a much expanded family. Careful records were kept of family events - including births and marriages. (A reminder how important it is to write down names and dates on photos and artifacts.) Linda also mentioned that there is a family recipe book. Look for some good Italian recipes in future newsletters. Thank you, Linda.

Correction

In the article about a day trip to Reading in the June issue, the auto-correct changed Goggle Factory into Google Factory. Both sound quite interesting, but it is Goggle Factory. Until fairly recently the building was a large factory that made goggles; it now houses a theater, studios, art work, and a cafe. As Ethel mentioned, when an artist's door is open, one can visit his/her studio and talk to the artist about the work in progress.



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