



Wissahickon Valley

*historical society*

Ambler  
Lower Gwynedd  
Whitpain

[www.wvalleyhs.org](http://www.wvalleyhs.org)  
October 2018

215-646-6541

P.O. Box 96, Ambler, PA 19002-0096  
Vol 19, Issue 12

## Join the WVHS at the historic Gwynedd Friends Meeting House for a tour

on Saturday, October 13 at 2 p.m.



We will tour the meeting house and  
grounds  
of this historic site.

It is located at the corner of 202  
(DeKalb Pike) and Norristown Rd.  
across from William Penn Inn.  
There is ample parking.

## Open House - Franklinville Schoolhouse

Sunday, October 21 1 to 4 p.m.  
between DeKalb Pike and Normandy Farm  
Estates on Morris Road



The 1895 Schoolhouse remains closed for renovations.

Current plans are to have “soft opening”  
for members and invited guests in December.

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## Mark Your Calendar

- Sept 29 - Whitpain Community Day - MCCC campus - 12 to 9 p.m. WVHS will have a table
- Oct. 5/Oct. 6 - SpringHouse Estates Harvest Festival - Friday 9 -6, Saturday 9 - 12
- Oct. 6 - Oktoberfest in Ambler - Butler Pike will be closed to traffic - WVHS will have a table (if you would like to help at the table for an hour or so, please let Russ Bellavance know - 215-646-6541)
- Oct. 13 - WVHS tour of Gwynedd Friends Meetinghouse - 2 p.m.
- Oct. 19/20 - The Valley Forge Quilt Show. Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, 132 E. Valley Forge Rd., King of Prussia
- Oct. 20 - Civil War Day at the Richard Wall House Museum - 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. - sponsored by the Cheltenham Township Historical Commission and Citizens for the Restoration of Historical LaMott
- Oct. 21 - Open House at our Franklinville Schoolhouse - 1 to 4 p.m.
- Oct. 25 - Black October - The Flu Epidemic (of 1919) in Montgomery County and Surrounding Area. Historical Society of Mont. Co., 1654 DeKalb Pike, Norristown - social 6:30, presentation 7 p.m.
- Oct. 27 - Evans Mumbower Mill - Ghost of Henry Mumbower - 5 to 8 p.m.
- Nov. 10 - Veterans' Day Commemoration in Lower Gwynedd - Five Points Park - Check Lower Gwynedd web-site for time
- Nov. 11 - Bells of Peace - 11 a.m. local time - national remembrance of the end of WWI - see article on page 3

## Nov. 6 - Election Day

The earliest elections in the United States used paper ballots and ballot boxes or voice votes. By the late 1880s reformers looked to voting machines and the first models were patented in the late 1880s. Ironically, there is a push now to return to at least having a paper trail for votes.

In our collection we have a wooden and canvas voting booth that came from the Centre Square Fire Company building. Thanks to Bob Whittock.

## A Short History of Gwynedd Friends' Meetinghouse

The October WVHS meeting will consist of a tour and talk about the Gwynedd Friends' Meetinghouse on the corner of 202 and Norristown Rd. Jim Quinn will be our tour guide.

The Gwynedd area was settled largely by Welsh immigrants in the late 1600s and early 1700s. Located in what is now Lower Gwynedd, the first meetinghouse on the site was built of logs in 1700. It was on the site of the current meetinghouse and was on a tract of land that had belonged to early Welsh settler Robert Evans.

It wasn't until much later that Gwynedd split into Upper and Lower Gwynedd and the site of the meetinghouse was on one of the highest point in the area as well as at the center of Gwynedd. A more permanent building was constructed on the site in 1712. In 1714, the Gwynedd Friends Monthly Meeting's first official book of minutes was written.

The corner property contains a large building that has been added on to several times as well as a burial ground and a one-room schoolhouse. There is an active pre-school and kindergarten operating today. The schoolhouse operated as probably the first elementary school in the area for many years. We will tour the meetinghouse and the grounds.

## Street Names Can Tell Stories

At the recent WVHS “picnic” (thanks again to Jean and Russ Bellavance for hosting and to Pat Plumb for being so flexible and to many members for the delicious food and good company), the topic of street names came up. Anyone know the origin of Midway St.?

Skippack Pike is named for its destination - Skippack. School Road is obvious; there has been a school on the site since the mid-1800s. Lewis Lane which T’s into Skippack at Shady Grove was named for the family of Saunders Lewis who lived at Dawesfield and wrote a book about it.



DeKalb Pike (202) was named for Gen. Baron Johann DeKalb (see left). He was born in Germany in 1721 and visited the area during the French-Indian War. He was sent by the French to assess the feelings of the colonists towards the British. In 1777 he returned with Lafayette to support the colonists fight for independence. He was at Valley Forge (and may have been in our area on his way there) during the winter of 1777. He later became the commander of the southern campaign. In 1780 his troops were defeated at Camden, South Carolina and DeKalb was fatally wounded.

On a lighter note, in Ambler the town’s development can be traced through the street names. “Main” Street suggests that the center of Ambler was in that area in early days. Butler Ave. (Butler Pike) led to the mills at Butler, PA. Haywood was named in honor of the Haywood family whose farm covered a large area along Bethlehem Pike and whose home is part of the Artman complex.

Mount Pleasant Avenue connects Morris Road down to the railroad track and to Ambler. It is certainly a mount - and is still quite pleasant as one crosses the Wissahickon over a stone bridge. The housing development along Mount Pleasant has streets named after astronauts Buzz Aldrin and Michael Collins - which dates its construction to the late 1960s/early 1970s.

Those who move to this area are often frustrated/confused by the numerous Township Line Roads. Another confusing repeat of a name is Mather’s Mill. It is most often connected with Hope Lodge - though that one is also called Farmar Mill. Just northeast of Mount Pleasant Avenue off of Morris Rs. is Mather’s Road which has a repurposed mill building (also called Mather’s Mill) near the Wissahickon Creek.

If you have a story to tell or a question about a road or street, please share the details. Send to [pegathome6@yahoo.com](mailto:pegathome6@yahoo.com).

## Bells of Peace

WVHS member Barry Johnson shared information about the Bells of Peace - A World War I Remembrance which is scheduled for Sunday, November 11, 2018 at 11 a.m. local time across the United States and its territories. The U.S. World War I Centennial Commission sponsored event will honor those who served in the Great War.

The United States participated in World War I from April 6, 1917 to November 11, 1918. In the war, 116,516 Americans died and over 200,000 were wounded.

Anyone can participate by tolling your bells slowly 21 times with a five-second interval between tolls beginning at 11 a.m. More information can be found at [www.ww1cc.org/bells](http://www.ww1cc.org/bells) It will have links to related apps and other content.



Thanks to <https://www.dreamhost.com> for hosting our website for free permanently because we are a non-profit. This is a value of \$140 a year. John Simon is our web-master. (Thanks, John) Check us out at [www.wvalleyhs.org](http://www.wvalleyhs.org)

## Renovations at the 1895 Schoolhouse

Work continues on the inside of the schoolhouse under the direction of members Joan Duxbury and Sally Zeller. It is looking great!

All exterior painting, the first floor meeting room, kitchen, bathroom, library, and all closets have been painted and look bright and fresh. The second floor has been prepped and Steve Vereb (Verco Painting) will be doing more painting this week. The major item relates to the floors. The second floor where the "classroom" and children's area will be located will probably be partly covered with carpet due to issues with the hardwood floors.

Some projects will be left for the future. The basement walls need to be parged, but this project will be postponed. Our street sign needs to be redone, but that will also wait for next year.

## 2018-19 Membership Letters

Members should have received the form for membership renewal recently. Please return them to WVHS, P.O. Box 96, Ambler, PA 19002-0096. It saves almost \$1 per newsletter when it is e-mailed rather than mailed through the post office.

Please consider giving a gift membership to someone who would be interested in local history. One idea is a teacher that you might know.

The WVHS would also appreciate support of the capital campaign which is funding the current renovations of the 1895 Schoolhouse. All donations are appreciated and are tax deductible. Thank you.



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