



Wissahickon Valley
historical society

Ambler
Lower Gwynedd
Whitpain

www.wvalleyhs.org
Box 96, Ambler, PA 19002

215-643-5048

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info@wvalleyhs.org

Annual WVHS Holiday Party



Sunday, Dec. 11 - 2 p.m.
at Russ and Jean Bellavance's home
148 S. Bethlehem Pike, Ambler

Please rsvp to Jean at
215-643-5048

Roast turkey and honey ham provided.
Please bring a dish to share - salad, vegetable, or dessert.

\$5 per person

Guests welcome.

Hope to see you there.

Decorating on Sat., Dec. 10.
Call Jean for details.

Membership Reminder

Thanks to everyone who has sent in their membership for 2016-2017. If you haven't, please consider signing up before the end of the year. Send memberships to MaryLou McFarland, 500 Trinity Place, Ambler, PA 19002-5836.

Mark Your Calendar

Dec. 3 - Candlelight Tours - Peter Wentz Farmstead - 3 to 9 p.m.

Dec. 4 - Historical Society of Fort Washington - Wassail Party music and finger food - 4 to 7 p.m.

Dec. 11 - WVHS Holiday Get-Together - 2 to 5 p.m.

Dec. 12 - Open House - 1895 Schoolhouse - Joan Duxbury and Sally Keller, docents

Jan. 9 - WVHS Monthly meeting - at the Blue Bell library - 7:30 p.m. Program: The Underground Railroad in South East Pennsylvania.

Odd-Fellows Hall - not Grange Hall

In the November newsletter a recent donation was described. It was a plaque honoring the Center Square Grange. The article referred to the Grange Hall that was located north west of Center Square. Bob Whittock pointed out that this building was actually the home to the Center Square Odd-Fellows.

According to Bob's records, the Center Square Grange held its first meetings in February 1919 at the Centre Square fire Hall and subsequently held most of their meetings there. They also held picnics at various local parks. Bob's information comes from diaries of Mrs. Bertha "Beideman" Rezer, 1898 graduate of the the Whitpain 1895 High School. Bob has been using the diaries to compile records of local organizations and activities. Thanks, Bob.

Recent Donations

Frank Scardino, Jr. recently donated his 1951 letter sweater from Ambler High School. That happens to be the year that Ambler won the league championship. The gift included a photo of the team. Great memories! Frank has also donated a number of AmChem memorabilia.



A watercolor of the tenant's house at what is now called Manderley Farm (at Penllyn-Blue Bell and Morris Roads) was recently donated to the WVHS. It was painted by long time Whitpain Historical Society member Gloria Schoenagle, a juried artist. A visit to this site is planned for spring 2017 so the painting is especially interesting.



Frank Russo, Jr. (left - demonstrating a colonial game) visited the Schoolhouse recently and brought lots of stories as well as a set of 18th and 19th century games. Some of the games will be housed at Franklinville; some at the 1895 Schoolhouse and will be used for Open Houses and student visits. Thanks, Frank.

Schools of Lower Gwynedd Township

As Wissahickon School District celebrates 50 years, this newsletter will feature the history of education in first Lower Gwynedd Township followed by Ambler Borough, and Whitpain Township and how the three joined together to form the Wissahickon School District in 1966. This month we feature Lower Gwynedd's schools.



In early days, some wealthy families hired a private tutor for their children. One early school was the Dager school on Bethlehem Pike which was built in 1860. (See left) By 1892 it was closed and was repurposed as a The School Inn and currently Newport House Restaurant.

From very early days, students from the Gwynedd area attended the Friends' school on 202. The building is still used by the Friends' meeting and shares a parking lot with the meetinghouse. A plaque indicates the historic building.

Nearby three replacement public schools were built: the Penllyn school in Penllyn, the Maple Grove school at Plymouth and Schoolhouse Rd., and the Cedar Hill school on the corner of Cedar Hill Road and Bethlehem Pike.

The first Penllyn school was located at Wister Avenue and Old Penllyn Pike. in 1923 and served the surrounding community of students. Later a larger building was constructed on Gwynedd Avenue just for the Penllyn community. This building no longer exists. Penllyn Park is how located on the site.

The stone Maple Grove School was located at the corner of Plymouth and Schoolhouse Road. The building is now a private home. (See right.)



The Cedar Hill School was located at the corner of Cedar Hill Road and Bethlehem Pike. By 1936 the building had been repurposed as a private home. The classrooms were replaced by a living room and the hall. The house was recently rehabilitated and is currently for sale.

A more modern SpringHouse School was built on Norristown Road near the intersection with Bethlehem Pike in the early 1900s. It served public school students into the 1960s. The building is now used by the elementary grades of Gwynedd Mercy Academy.

Students from the Lower Gwynedd area who wished to further their education would travel to Ambler High School, Norristown High School, North Penn High School, or private high schools.

Gwynedd Mercy High School and Gwynedd Mercy University are also located in Lower Gwynedd.

Brown's Folly Questers Visit 1895 Schoolhouse

The Brown's Folly Questers recently held their monthly meeting at the 1895 Schoolhouse. Russ Bellavance shared the history of the building and society, and members toured the museum. They enjoyed their visit. One member and her husband worked for Moore Products and they will be sharing with us some of the history of this local company.

Whitpain Deed Shared with Whitpain Township

An interesting deed which involved early land grants and transfers in the Whitpain area is being shared with Whitpain Township. Russ Bellavance has transcribed the deed and researched its local significance. These text pieces accompany the deed. The two sided framing was completed with part of the 2016 grant from the SpringHouse Questers. The deed is on temporary loan to Whitpain Township and is housed at the township building. At right: Marie Goldkamp (WVHS), Adam Zucker (Chairman of Whitpain Board of Supervisors), and Russ Bellavance (WVHS).



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