



[www.wvalleyhs.org](http://www.wvalleyhs.org)  
P.O. Box 96, Ambler, Pa 19002

799 Skippack Pike, Blue Bell, PA  
[info@wvalleyhs.org](mailto:info@wvalleyhs.org)

215-646-6541  
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Welcome to the 2019/2020 Year  
of the Wissahickon Valley Historical Society.  
Please join us for the first meeting of the year -  
Monday, September 9 at 7 p.m.  
at the 1895 Schoolhouse on Skippack Pike

Program: \*Member Share\*  
Members are invited to bring an item of interest to  
share. If it has a story, even better.  
Also see our new schoolhouse clock.

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Open House at  
Franklinville School on Morris Road  
and the 1895 Schoolhouse on  
Skippack Pike.  
Sunday, September 15 from 1 to 3  
p.m.



## Mark Your Calendar

Saturday, Sept. 7 - Winds N' Wheels at historic Wings Field - 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
Monday, Sept. 9 - WVHS monthly meeting at 1895 Schoolhouse - 7 p.m.  
Saturday, Sept. 14 - Lower Gwynedd Pike Fest - 10 to 4  
Sunday, Sept. 15 - Open House - 1895 Schoolhouse and Franklinville School - 1 to 3 p.m.  
Tuesday, Sept. 17 - Fort Washington Historical Society Meeting - Clifton House -  
Program - Ed Zwicker about Hawkswell (the property that is next to Clifton House.  
Saturday, Sept. 28 - Whitpain Community Day - at Mont. County Community College, 12  
to 4 p.m.  
Saturday, Oct. 5 - Ambler's Octoberfest - 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.  
Saturday, Oct. 12 - member Nina Martino will be the guest speaker at Material Culture,  
4700 Wissahickon Ave. Philadelphia. - Title "Growing up Martino/A Philadelphia Family  
of Artists"  
Sunday, Oct. 20 - Open House at Franklinville School - 1 to 3 p.m.  
Sunday, Oct. 20 - Wine and Cheese Open House/Fund Raiser at the 1895 Schoolhouse -  
3 to 5 p.m. - See details below - Reservations at 215-646-6541

Sundays from 1 to 2:30 p.m. at Hope Lodge - tours - check [hopedodgepa@gmail.com](mailto:hopedodgepa@gmail.com)

**If you are interested in helping with any of the above WVHS events, please contact Russ Bellavance. The Lower Gwynedd, Whitpain, and Ambler events are a fun way to share our mission with the community.**

## Ready for the School Year - Franklinville Schoolhouse Gets Special Attention

Many thanks to member Dot MacDermott for making new, fresh muslin curtains for the Franklinville Schoolhouse. The muslin curtains are probably quite authentic and also offer shade to the artifacts inside the building.

The Franklinville Schoolhouse does have a water issue. It sits on the crawl-space that has been subject to flooding. The moisture has recently affected some of the wall plaster.

There has long been an issue with drainage at the site, but this summer's rains have exacerbated the issue. The solution involves facilitating run-off both from the building and from the area. The WVHS board is exploring various solutions.

Franklinville School was constructed in 1858 under the Whitpain Township School Directors after parents requested a local school for their children. It was in use as a school until 1916 when the Whitpain Consolidated School District opened the brick building at Skippack Pike and School Road (now a Korean Church).

Under the direction of Ralph Beaver Strassburger, the building was used as a school for his son as well as a community meeting site.

In the 1980s the building was in need of another repurposing. The Historical Society of Whitpain undertook the task of renovating the building. It has been open as a museum and has hosted numerous school groups over the years.

The Franklinville School was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2014. In January 2015 the

Historical Society of Whitpain merged with the Wissahickon Valley Historical Society.



## **Community Loses Two Outstanding Citizens**

### **Lower Gwynedd Citizen Thaddeus W. Smith**

The life of Thaddeus W. Smith was celebrated at Bethlehem Baptist Church on August 23. Born in Texas in 1921, he came to Lower Gwynedd with an Army buddy while both were serving in World War II and met and married Irene Ruth Lee.

Throughout his nearly 98 years he was heavily involved with the community through various groups. He and his wife were leaders in the civil rights struggle and helped to desegregate Lower Gwynedd Elementary School in the early 1950s. In 2015 he was presented the Citizen of the Year award by Stephen Paccione, chairman of the Lower Gwynedd Board of Supervisors.

### **Whitpain Citizen Anthony Greco**

The life of Anthony Greco was celebrated at St. Helena's Catholic Church on August 30. A 46 year resident of Whitpain Township, "Tony" served on Whitpain Township Planning Commission, Whitpain Township Zoning Hearing Board, and on Whitpain's Board of Supervisors. As a young man, he proudly served in the U.S. Naval Reserves at Willow Grove Naval Airbase as an aircrew member, and he flew surveillance missions during the Cuban missile crisis. He later attended Drexel University. Tony was a supporter of the Wissahickon Valley Historical Society.

**Our condolences to the families of Mr. Smith and Mr. Greco.**

## **Recent Donation**

John Simon recently transferred a sharpening stone (see photo on next page) that Bob Whittock wanted to be housed at the WVHS. It will be displayed in our basement museum along with various other tools of the early 1900s. Bob had related that his grandfather had used it at the store (which we know as Reed's) and would sharpen patrons' knives and tools.

Of course, as we research sharpening stone, we come up with lots of questions. Several different kinds of stone can be used for this tool. They are fine grained, smooth stones, but must have a certain amount of grit. Looking on Google, there are several ways the stone could have been attached to a stand. Some stands would require the operator to stand; others would allow the operator to sit. Some sort of pedal would attach to the metal piece in the middle of the stone and would allow for the stone to spin - usually using foot power. If any member knows about sharpening stones and/or would like to research our new artifact, please contact Russ Bellavance.

## **Thanks to Summer Intern Connor Waite**

Wissahickon High School graduate Connor Waite spent part of his summer before college helping with several research projects at the Schoolhouse. He made a list of local Revolutionary era sites.

The pamphlet will introduce Chew House, St. Thomas Episcopal Church, Hope Lodge, Evans-Mumbower Mill, Blue Bell Inn, Dawesfield, Broad Axe Tavern, and Valley Forge. Watch for the pamphlet coming on the WVHS website.

Connor also researched an interesting deed in our collection. The deed - dated in the late 1700s - served as a resolution to a long dispute between - at various times - the British, the Iroquois nation, and Virginia. It is interesting that David McCullough's latest book *Pioneers* covers the same period - involving a similar land transfer in southwestern Ohio.

From our list of "to do's", Connor also worked (and continues to work on) transcribing the Haywood diaries. The diaries are written in beautiful cursive which can be a challenge to read. Connor is working on entries from the 1880s. One striking impression is how often people traveled to Philadelphia at that time. Connor even took copies of a few pages of the diary with him to college - University of Scranton - where he is majoring in history.



### **Nicole Hudson Joins Our Thursday Morning Crew**

Nicole Hudson drove past our headquarters as she traveled from Philadelphia to Delaware Valley University, and now that she has graduated and preparing for graduate school, Nicole is volunteering with us on Thursday mornings. She has been entering data about our collection on-line. She has started with recently accessioned artifacts. You can see information about the above mentioned knife sharpening stone on our web-site. Welcome, Nicole. Volunteers are welcome on Thursday mornings - 9:30 to noon. There are lots of jobs to choose from.

Work continues on our new web-site - thanks to Bob, Russ, Joan, Sally, and Barry. To see the work-in-progress try

[www.wvalleyhs.org/test](http://www.wvalleyhs.org/test).



### **Follow-up on Dager Family**

Last month's newsletter included an article about Dager Road. One of our members is a descendent of the family and shared that the home and farm were at the intersection of Bethlehem Pike and what became Dager Road. The Dager family donated land for the one room school which was at the intersection and was called the Dager School. The school building now houses the Ristorante San Marco.. The Dager family was very influential in Lower Gwynedd/Ambler's development.

### **Membership for 2019-2020/Fund Raiser**

Please watch your mail for membership information for the 2019-2020 year. The mailing will also include details of the WVHS's special wine and cheese open house/fund raiser at the 1895 Schoolhouse on October 20 from 3 to 5 p.m.

Reservations at 215-646-6541.



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