



Wissahickon Valley

historical society

Ambler  
Lower Gwynedd  
Whitpain

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

[info@wvalleyhs.org](mailto:info@wvalleyhs.org)

Box 96, Ambler, PA 19002



*Please join us at the annual  
WVHS Holiday Party  
Sunday, December 9, 2018 at 1-4 PM  
1895 School House*

*Come see the progress so far of  
our major renovation project*

*Sweet and savory treats  
Tea, Coffee and Holiday Punch*

*RSVP to the 215-643-5048 or [bellavance@verizon.net](mailto: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 email at  
[bellavance@verizon.net](mailto:bellavance@verizon.net)*

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215-646-6541

## A Driving Tour of Selected Colonial and Revolutionary War Properties - Thanks to Summer Intern Connor Waite

During the summer of 2019, the Wissahickon High School graduate Connor Waite worked with Wissahickon Valley Historical Society volunteers and completed several projects. One project was to make a list of local sites connected with the Revolutionary War. The following shares some of Connor's research:



A visitor to our area can get a sense of our Colonial and Revolutionary War history by driving to selected properties, starting in Germantown and ending in Valley Forge. All sites except Dawesfield have events open to the public. Check individual web-sites for dates and hours. The locations are listed in order along a direct route. While you are driving, remember that the troops **walked** this path. Please enjoy your tour!

### 1. Chew House/Cliveden

Dating back to 1763, this mansion has remained remarkably unchanged over the course of its history. An example of a colonial era Georgian mansion, its front wing still appears as it did during its construction. Owned by the wealthy and influential Chew family for seven generations, it is now owned and operated by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. This house is best known for the pivotal role it played in the Battle of Germantown, where it became a center of fighting after British soldiers began using it to harass advancing Continental forces. It is said that the British stand at Chew house, along with a thick fog, turned the battle in their favor and led to Washington's retreat back up Germantown Avenue and eventually along Skippack Pike. The last skirmish took place in Broad Axe. The property is currently owned by the National Trust for



Historic Preservation and operated as a museum. See their website at <http://www.cliveden.org> for museum hours. *6401 Germantown Ave, Philadelphia*

### 2. St. Thomas Episcopal Church

The original church was constructed in 1683. Its existence as an Episcopal church reflects the fact that this area was settled by Englishmen who belonged to the Church of England. This is in contrast with Whitpain, where the earliest church was Boehm's German Reformed Church, and Lower Gwynedd, where the earliest church was the Quaker Gwynedd Meeting House. The modern church building was built in 1881. The location has remained the same over the

centuries. During the Revolutionary War, it was damaged during the Battle of Whitemarsh and the American's retreat to Valley Forge. Here one can see one of the oldest continuing houses of worship in the country. For more information about visiting the church and its historic graveyard, see their website at <https://stthomaswhitemarsh.org>.  
*Bethlehem Pike & Camp Hill Road, Fort Washington*



### 3. Hope Lodge

Just a little north of St. Thomas we find Hope Lodge. Constructed sometime after 1743, Hope Lodge is a colonial era residence once belonging to Samuel Morris, a Quaker entrepreneur and a prominent member of the important Morris family. A visit to Hope Lodge offers one insight into the daily life of the colonial era elite. The property was renamed as Hope Lodge in the 1780s in honor of Henry Hope (owner of the Hope Diamond) who purchased the property as a wedding gift for his ward. Hope Lodge stands as one of the earliest local examples of historic preservation, being bought for that purpose in 1922. For information about hours of operation and events at Hope Lodge, see their website at <http://www.historichopelodge.org>.  
*553 South Bethlehem Pike, Fort Washington*



### 4. Broad Axe Tavern



Built in the 1680s, the Broad Axe Tavern was the earliest of the local colonial taverns, such as the Blue Bell Inn, the Spring House Tavern and the William Penn Inn. Like those other taverns, it was built along the trails to the grain mills, and served the needs of weary, thirsty and hungry farmers traveling to mills and markets. During the colonial period taverns served as a center of news, as it was where locals went to hear people reading newspapers or read their mail. It also served as a place that farmers went for business transactions and to discuss political events, such as whether to seek independence from Great

Britain. During the Revolutionary War the continental army marched past it several times. Until recently, the building continued to serve hungry and thirsty travelers, but as of the time of this writing (2019) it is vacant.  
*901 W Butler Pike Ambler*

### 5. Dawesfield

Constructed as a gentleman's farm in the year 1734, it stands today as an example of an estate of the time. Featuring multiple colonial era structures, it is most noteworthy for being the base of operations of George Washington's continental army, under the name of Camp Morris. Even though they were only there for two



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weeks the site saw numerous historic events occur including the court martial of General “Mad” Anthony Wayne. The magnificent main building and its many outbuildings are privately owned and, at the time of this writing, are for sale.

*585 Lewis Lane, Blue Bell*

## 6. Blue Bell Inn

Founded in 1743 as the White House, the Blue Bell Inn would find its primary use in serving weary, hungry and thirsty travelers. The inn would find historical fame in the Revolutionary War for George Washington’s frequent stays. In 1793 the White House was renamed the Blue Bell Inn, a name that would in the year 1840 be adopted by the local post office (until then called Pigeontown). The inn has had many owners over the years, with one of the longest tenures being in the hands of the Lamprecht family. Recently, the Inn has undergone a dramatic interior renovation and is a very popular place to see in Blue Bell. For more information, please see their website at <https://bluebellinn.com>. *601 W Skippack Pike, Blue Bell*

## 7. Evans-Mumbower Mill

During the colonial era, and continuing through the early years of the republic, settlers built many different kinds of mills along the Wissahickon Creek and its tributaries. The only one that is still maintained as a mill is the Evans-Mumbower Mill, which was originally built as a saw mill in 1745. The mill was reconstructed several times and was converted into a grain mill during the early 1800s. Today, the mill serves as a museum that demonstrates the operation of a grain mill of the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The mill is owned and operated by Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association. For information about open hours and special events, see their website at <https://wvwa.org>. *Swedesford Rd, North Wales*



## 8. Valley Forge National Historic Park

The most famous on our tour sites is Valley Forge National Historic Park where Washington’s Continental Army spent the winter of 1777-78. During that winter, Washington famously managed to maintain cohesion in the Continental Army despite all odds. It was also here that George Washington successfully fought to maintain his position against rival generals who sought to replace him, an affair known to history as the Conway Cabal. Valley Forge is considered to be the location where the Continental Army reached its lowest point. During that winter the army also began to be drilled and standardized specially under the direction of Baron Von Steuben. The Marquis de Lafayette was another strong presents at





Overall, the park at Valley Forge is a central site to the Revolutionary War. Visitors can spend many hours at the Park, but a “must see” is certainly the colonial building known as Washington’s Headquarters. The building was then known as the Isaac Potts house, and was built around 1760. For more information about visiting Valley Forge National Historic Park, please see the website of the National Park Service at <https://www.nps.gov/vafo/index.htm>.  
*1400 North Outer Line Drive, King of Prussia*

Please note that several of WVHS 2020 programs will complement the above tour.

### **Mark Your Calendar**

Saturday, Dec. 7 - Wentz Farmstead, Worcester, PA - Candlelight Tour - 3 to 9 p.m. - Wentz Farmstead is a Montgomery County Park which has its own connection with George Washington - \$2 suggested donation

Saturday, Dec. 7 - Fort Washington Historical Society Wassail Open House - 4 to 7 p.m. - Clifton House, Fort Washington

Saturday, Dec. 7 - Holiday open house and beer tasting at Hope Lodge

Saturday, Dec. 14 - Holiday tours at Hope Lodge - 11:30, 1, and 2:30

Sunday, Dec. 8 - WVHS holiday party - see front page for details.

Monday, Jan. 13 - WVHS monthly meeting - 1895 Schoolhouse - Program: The Writings of George Washington presented by Russ Bellavance - 7 p.m.

### **Three New WVHS Board Members**

Welcome and thanks to new WVHS board members Carol Kalos, Charlie Miller, and Joe Langella. They have already shared some good ideas and all helped with recent open houses at the 1895 Schoolhouse. Volunteers are always welcome for special projects and/or Thursday morning work at the Schoolhouse.

### **Recent Donations**

Framed edition front page of the Ambler Gazette (see right) - dated Jan.7, 1886 - donated by Montgomery Newspapers - watch the web-site for a article about this item

Typewriter - from Judith Mantle - she learned to type on it and since it works, we plan to have children be able to try it. Children are attracted to typewriters - saying they look like a computer keyboard - but not quite.

Patent medicine bottles - from Adam Tucker



## **Social Media Presence**

WVHS is very excited about progress made in 2019 to increase its presence on social media. WSD junior Emma Siegel and her father Keith Siegel worked to set up and now keep current a Facebook page. Log on and “like us” at @wissahockonvalleyhistoricalsociety on Facebook.

Bob Bradley, Joan Duxbury, Barry Johnson, Sally Zeller, and Russ Bellavance have been working hard on the Society’s new web-site. Bob is our “web-site Santa” and we should see a new, expanded web-site look beginning with the new year. It will have the same e-mail address.

There will be a short printed newsletter at the end of Dec. with details about spring programs and our social media presence. These tools will give members and friends more ways to explore our history and to share their research and questions. Thanks to all who have worked on these important projects.



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