



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

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May/June 2020

Greetings and best wishes from  
the Wissahickon Valley Historical Society.

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The COVID-19 pandemic has certainly stressed us all, but also helped us focus on what is most important - our families and the various communities to which we belong.

Following Gov. Wolf’s directive for public safety, for the foreseeable future, the WVHS activities will be on hold and the building will be closed.

It is wonderful to know that, thanks to the diligent work of society members and Whitpain Township, our building and our collections are safe.



It is reminder, too, that we need to keep the preservation of the Franklinville School in our plans.



**We are working remotely and if you have any collection concerns, we can be contacted at [info@wvalleyhs.org](mailto:info@wvalleyhs.org)**

**The WVHS COVID-19 Community History Project**

We are certainly in the midst of an historical event. One of the advantages of studying history is that we can appreciate how people in the past have made it through difficult times.

We are documenting the impact the pandemic is having on our area, so we are asking the public to contribute digital and physical material reflecting the

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influence of the virus on our community - including e-mails, public appeals, photographs, announcements, promotional materials, remote learning information, and the like. We intend to collect, organize, and preserve these items for future generations.

Some of us can remember WWII and how it affected our communities (see reference to Kings' Daughters newsletter article below). Others of us can remember the polio scare of the late 1940/early 1950s. The AIDS outbreak and 9/11 affected all of us as well. We can retell these stories partly because we have historic documents and artifacts that were collected at the time. The journals, diaries, newspapers, photos, and letters of those times help us understand the events and how they affected people of the time and how they struggled and survived.

We are living through another historic period. As an historical society, we can help future generations learn about it. Local and personal reflections and artifacts are very important to sharing the story.

## **How to Record Your Thoughts about the Pandemic**

We can all help with recording the history being made today. Suggestions about where to start have been offered by numerous sources. The Library of Congress has long been collecting personal stories through their Story Corps program. Suggestions for developing and recording them are at the Story Corps web-site.

Many websites offer templates for recording thoughts and events related to the pandemic. One interesting one is offered by Staples. It consists of a multipage booklet that is designed for children, but it has several good ideas for recording events and feelings. More and more companies and public sites are offering suggestions and templates.

Of course, taking photos is a great way to record what is going on. They might show signs in windows, the empty streets, the line outside a grocery store, the lonely playground and, of course, all of us in our masks.



Children are amazingly flexible. I loved seeing a group of siblings playing shadow tag in their sunny backyard. Of course, Zoom parties are becoming more and more creative. The WVHS board had their April meeting via Zoom. A friend's bridge groups continues their twice weekly game on line. Schools and their staff - from kindergarten through college - are developing new and exciting ways to educate. Please share your experiences for our archives.



Please consider collecting ephemera that relates to this time. This might include notices/articles about businesses, churches, organizations as well as letters and photos. A local senior center posted a set of letters from neighborhood children - complete with jokes and words of encouragement. Both local and Philadelphia newspapers have included both stories and photo spreads of the pandemic's effects.

Share your contributions with us at [info@wvalleyhs.org](mailto:info@wvalleyhs.org). As this is an archives project, please include names, dates, and locations of photos and permission from anyone in the photos.

### **Finding History in 1940s Church Newsletters**

During WWII members of the First Presbyterian Church of Ambler compiled and mailed a newsletter to Ambler residents who were serving around the world. Luckily copies of the newsletters were kept by the church and ended up in the WVHS collection. They document everyday events in Ambler during the early 1940s. They are being carefully read by several local historians, and we look forward to a program they hope to share with the society during the coming year.

### **Do You Know Anything About Prohibition in Our Area?**

One of our board members is researching the Prohibition period and its effects on the area. The 18th Amendment was passed in 1920 and was repealed in 1933. If you know the location of local speakeasies or if you know of someone to interview about local bootleggers or temperance activists, please email us at [info@wvalleyhs.org](mailto:info@wvalleyhs.org).

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### **Congratulations to Wissahickon School District!!!**

The Wissahickon High School was ranked 8th in Pennsylvania on 2020 U. S. News and World Report list. Congratulations to students, teachers, school employees, school board members, and the community which supports our high school.

