



www.wvalleyhs.org info@wvalleyhs.org September 2021

This is our first Newsletter with our new system of communications! Our former Newsletters contained both news of the Society as well as research articles. Starting with this issue, the Newsletter will be bringing you news of the society while research articles will appear in a separate Bulletin. You will receive the first Bulletin later this fall.

WVHS will publish the Newsletter monthly, and it will be posted immediately on the website. The Bulletin, a member benefit, will come out about three times a year.

The Newsletter will now be sent to anyone and everyone, so please feel free to forward it to your family, friends, and neighbors. We want to build WVHS. We hope they are inspired to attend our events and join our Society!

We hope to have a healthy year ahead, filled with many WVHS activities. As always, the Board of Directors truly appreciates your support.

In this issue read about:

- *Although unofficial, a grant may be coming our way*
- *Volunteers needed at fall street festivals*
- *Meeting announcement: Monday, October 11*
- *Farewell to Yen Ho, history researcher and blogger*
- *Flags commemorate September 11*
- *Open House on Sunday, Nov 7*

- *Welcome to new WVHS members*
- *Do you have items or photos to donate?*
- *A history question answered*
- *Want to help with our displays?*
- *Newsletter-naming contest*
- *Guidelines for a new grant*
- *2021-22 dates for your calendar*
- *Summary of the Board of Directors' August meeting*
- *Two celebrations in our future: 2025 and 2026*
- *Amchem history displays*
- *A history coincidence*

Another Grant? Yes (but it's still unofficial)! WVHS has been notified that we will be receiving another grant for renovations at the Franklinville School, but this news is still unofficial. We'll keep you posted.

Volunteers Needed for Local Street Festivals: WVHS will present a table at three locations, and volunteers are needed to assist Joe Langella (Society VP and Membership Chair). You do not have to commit to the full afternoon; an hour of your time would be appreciated. This is a great way to see your neighbors—outdoors. To sign up, please contact WVHS: info@WVallyHS.org or 215-646-6541.

- Whitpain Community Festival: Montco Community College, Saturday, Sept 25, 12-4 pm
- Lower Gwynedd Township Fall Fest: Sunday, Sept 26, 12-4 pm
- Amblerfest/Octoberfest: Saturday, Oct 2, 11-6 pm

Our Next Meeting: Monday, October 11. See future emails for the time, location, and speaker.

Amateur Historian Extraordinaire: Yen Ho

By Peg Johnston

Yen Ho has been a great help to the study of local history and to WVHS. Over the past two years, her Amateur Historian blog has featured people and places in the Wissahickon Valley. Yen has generously shared her always-interesting entries on the Wissahickon Valley Historical Society web-site. Be sure to check out this great source for local history stories. Thank you, Yen! And she has done more:

Yen is a Wissahickon School District graduate and continued her studies at Temple (BS - Architectural Preservation) and Drexel University (MS - Library and Information Science).

She can trace her interest in history all the way back to a placemat of all the presidents - up to George W. Bush - that her parents gave her as a child. She remembers all of the history courses that she took at Shady Grove, Wissahickon Middle School, and Wissahickon High School. Then her interest in local history grew when she did field work for courses at Temple.

Over the past couple of years, Yen has volunteered at the WVHS - taking on a variety of tasks - from accessioning to researching to painting and cleaning. She also worked at the Peter Wentz Farmstead, where she helped update their archives and library.

Meanwhile, Yen has developed connections with several local sites. She remembers celebrating the end of many school years at Mermaid Lake in Whitpain. This site's future is in the hands of Whitpain Township with at least part of it now being preserved as open space.

Several local houses also captured Yen's imagination. Unfortunately the Foulke mansion no longer exists, except in photos, but the Revolutionary-era words of its young visitor/resident, Sally Wister, remain with us. The mansion was located in

Penllyn, but demolished in the 1990s. Yen's recent Amateur Historian blog about the Ingersoll-Clayton house drew over 100 responses with several of them from descendants of the Ingersoll-Clayton family.

Yen moved back to Vietnam with her parents in August. Her parents came to the United States from Vietnam at the end of the war and look forward to retiring there. Yen will start a job there as a teacher-librarian at the Western Australian International School System in Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City).



Yen Ho, a history blogger who assisted WVHS, has moved to Vietnam.

We certainly wish Yen and her parents well in their newest adventure and are grateful for Yen's contribution to our website and archives. Meanwhile, check out Amateur Historian on the WVHS website. Yen notes in her latest blog that her entries will

continue through the end of the year. We look forward to these entries and to hearing about her impressions and experiences in Vietnam. Thank you Yen!

Remembering September 11: Our country held numerous ceremonies to commemorate the 20th anniversary of 9/11. To honor this day and its heroes, Joan Duxbury placed flags at the Franklinville School and the Whitpain 1895 Public School.



Flags to remember September 11 on the 20th anniversary

Save the date: Open House at the 1895 School on Nov 7, 1-3 pm. WWII theme to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

Welcome New Members: WVHS has welcomed the following new members in the last several months:

- Judy Eitzen
- Kathy Hunsicker
- Carol Jacob
- Terry Leanness
- Matt Metcalf
- Bob Stafford
- Tiffany Weldon
- Mike Zebe
- Linda and Roger Tourdot and family (in memory of Robert Whittock)

Are you DOWNSIZING? Think of WVHS. We will accept certain old items, especially those which tell the story of our area. Photographs are especially valuable to us. Please do not write on the back of these precious items. Instead, notify WVHS, and we will offer you advice about how to identify the year and location of the photo.

info@WValleyHS.org

Mystery Solved: An out-of-state author contacted WVHS recently with a question. We were able to help her find what she needed as one new fact raised another question. Finally, she concludes, "I've enjoyed my sleuthing, and it has been confirmed that the current Springhouse Estates did grow out of the 'Springhouse Branch of Open Door.' The change in name came in 1978, the very year my grandmother went there. This was confirmed by ... ACTS Retirement Communities headquarters." So, a bit of history has been unscrambled, all because (the author suspects) the facility was using up old stationery.

Want to Help Create WVHS Displays? We have display cases at our three municipal buildings (Ambler Borough, Whitpain Township, and Lower Gwynedd Township) and occasionally at the two Wissahickon Public Libraries (Ambler and Blue Bell). If you know

arts and graphics and would like to help spotlight our local history from our collection, please let us know at info@WValleyHS.org



The Blue Bell display above, showing the three municipalities which WVHS and the libraries serve, was moved to Ambler.

The Board is Pondering: The winner of the name-the-newsletter contest will be announced soon.

Help us meet a requirement for a future grant: New Sign-in Book for WVHS Volunteers. WVHS is seeking funding to add air conditioning to the 1895 Public

School. Protecting our collection is vital. Certain Commonwealth grants require that a museum be open for 100 days per year. To help meet this requirement, Joan Duxbury has created a sign-in booklet at the 1895 School. If you are working at the school, please make a note of your attendance.

Important dates for 2021-2022 (However, check the website. COVID may cause cancellations):

October 11, speaker to be determined

November 7, Sunday Open House, 1-3 pm

December 5, Sunday Holiday Open House, 1-3 pm

January, no meeting. Stay warm

February 7, (Note change of date to avoid conflict with Valentines' Day) speaker to be determined

March 14, speaker to be determined

April 11, speaker to be determined

May 9, WVHS elections and speaker to be determined

June, possible picnic?

Notes from the Board of Directors' August Meeting

1. The Board is waiting for the \$20,000 from the Keystone Communities Program grant to be mailed. The state is delayed because it is dealing with pandemic funding relief issues.
2. WVHS has recently obtained a PA vendor number (to receive the grant funds) and a PA state sales tax exemption number.
3. Matt Metcalf, a new Board member, has already volunteered to take over the WVHS display cases at each of the municipal buildings, replacing Peg Johnston.
4. The books in the library are sticking to the paint on the shelves (installed in the 1990s, according to Frank Russo). So a future project will be to line the shelves with acid-free felt.
5. Joe Langella is investigating WVHS having a table at the three local fall festivals.

6. The Board continues to investigate ways to designate what we are calling Revolution Road, Washington's route from Germantown to Schwenksville, now mostly Route 73.
7. Local townships may be setting up historical commissions. The Board is unclear what they would do and how WVHS would coordinate with them.
8. The Board has been reviewing the Bylaws. Proposed changes will be presented to the membership.
9. Members are being asked to re-name the Newsletter, which will announce WVHS news and be distributed widely. A Bulletin, with research, will be published three times per year and available to members.
10. Carol is trying to get contractors' estimates to continue work at the Franklinville School.
11. Open House at 1895 School will be held on November 7, 1-3 PM. It will showcase a WWII collection, focusing on the King's Daughters Newsletters and some special donations.
12. The "fall" wine-and-cheese fundraiser has been postponed until spring due to COVID restrictions.
13. Individuals who have been vaccinated and who wear a mask can visit the 1895 School by appointment only. This is also the Montgomery County policy.
14. Montgomery County Historical Society is planning a YouTube on the Franklinville School to create interest in our fundraising campaign for renovations.
15. Terry Leanness, a retired IT specialist, has volunteered to assist WVHS with archive work.

Two Reminders: 1) America 250 is coming in 2026! 2) WVHS will turn 50 in 2025!

Please send us your ideas as we plan events to celebrate: info@WValleyHS.org

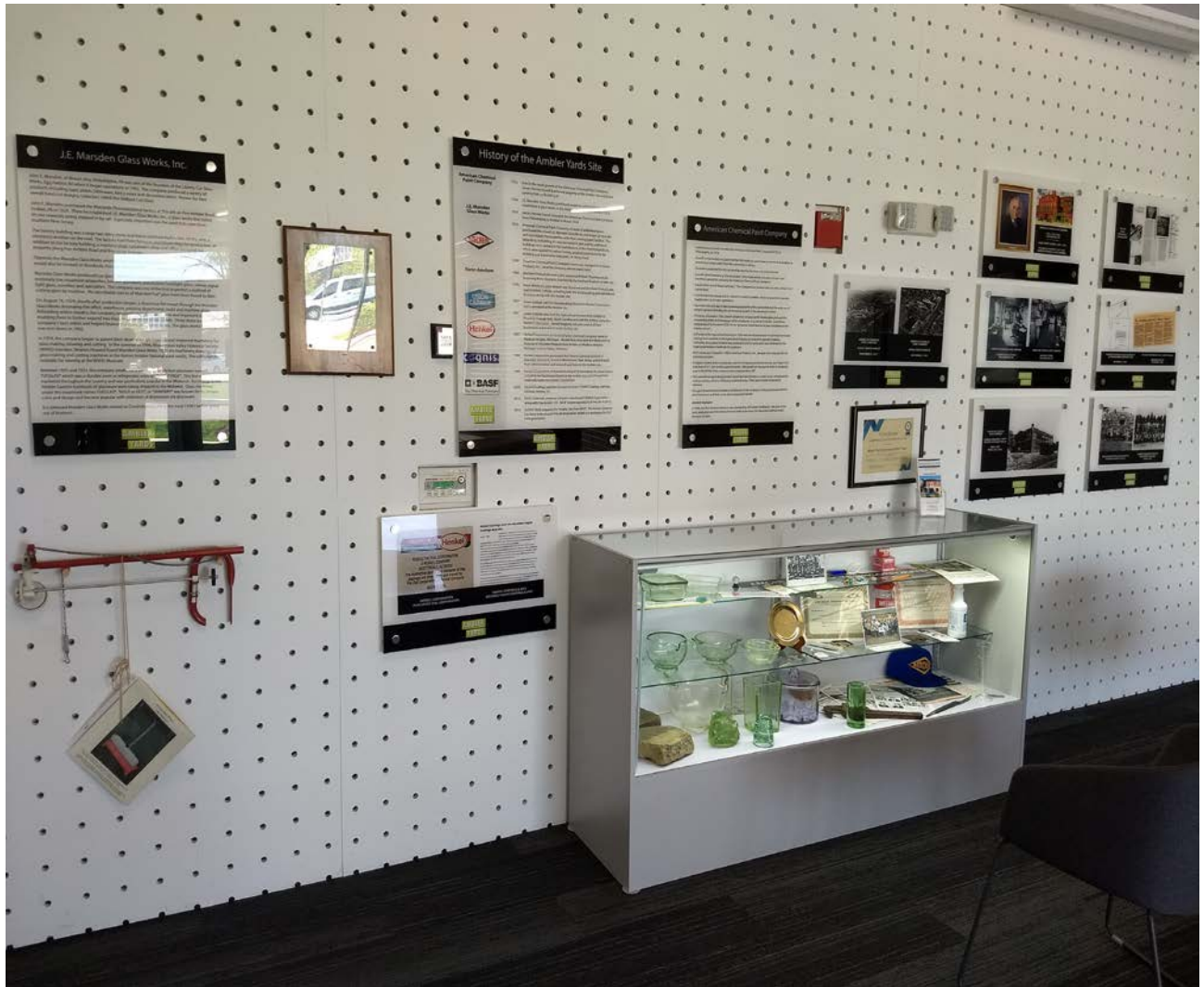


Amchem Display at Ambler Yards and the 1895 School's Turret

The next time you are in Ambler, stop by Ambler Yards, Building 18 (the former Amchem lobby at 300 Brookside Avenue), to see the history display. Open during normal business hours, Ambler Yards offers innovative commercial property for lease at the former Amchem campus. The lobby contains several wall displays highlighting the history of Amchem, which previously manufactured metalworking and agricultural chemicals. WVHS member Joan Duxbury reports that she and member Gary Fuess, both former Amchem employees, worked on the wall displays with the Ambler Yards General Partners and their graphic designer, the wife of one of the partners.

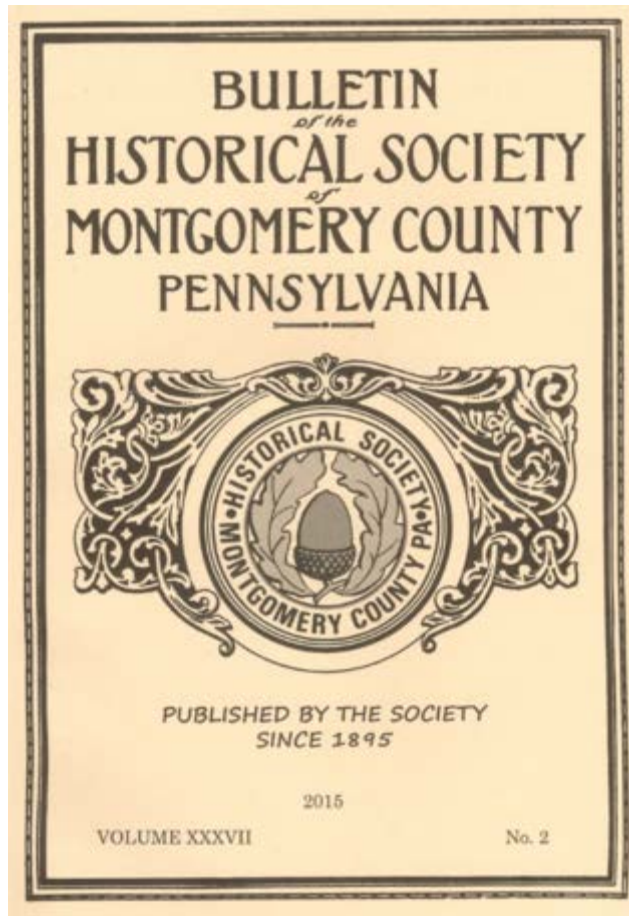
The display case, which belongs to Ambler Yards, contains J.E.Marsden Glass Works items from the WVHS collection, along with Amchem memorabilia. Amchem and Marsden Glass Works moved to the Ambler site in 1924 and shared the site until 1935 when Amchem purchased the closed Marsden Glass Works property. This was the beginning of the site expansion for Amchem.

In 2015 Ambler Yards acquired the 26 acre Amchem property and has renovated it into a one-of-a-kind open and flexible workspace. Watch the Ambler Yards transformation video: <https://station-partners.com/properties/ambler-yards/>. Also, at the 1895 School, Joan and her sister Sally Zeller are in the process of updating the Amchem display in the turret area on the second floor. Read more about the history of Amchem on the WVHS website: <https://www.wvalleyhs.org/amchem-history/>.



WVHS members created the Amchem history display at Ambler Yards.

A Funny Thing—History Newsletter found years later in an odd place. Vice President Joe Langella often makes purchases at “The Archive,” a used bookstore in Lansdale. He especially looks for old copies of the *Bulletin*, published by the Historical Society of Montgomery County. He is filling in the missing copies needed for the WVHS library collection. Recently, he bought an issue from the 1990s and brought it to a Board meeting because—inside he found a decades-old *HSMC Newsletter* addressed to WVHS Secretary Marie Goldkamp!



The WVHS library holds an extensive collection of editions of the Bulletin of the Historical Society of Montgomery County Pennsylvania. Each Bulletin makes for fascinating reading about our county, state, and nation.

