

The Valley Crier



Welcome to the first issue of our WVHS newsletter when it is called The Valley Crier! It carries WVHS news and announcements to keep our members (and others!) informed about our activities. If you have friends, neighbors, or relatives (near or far) who would like to receive The Valley Crier, please send us their email address, and we will add them to our mailing list. In this issue, see articles about....

- **Open House on November 7, 1-3 pm (Clocks change that weekend!)**
- **Special Designation for “Revolution Road”**
- **Time to renew your dues**
- **New grant funding—WVHS needs a contractor**
- **Holiday Party cancelled to keep us safe from COVID**
- **Items added to our Collection**
- **Downsizing? Old area photos have value**
- **Members pass new WVHS Bylaws**
- **Suggestions for a mascot to depict our area**
- **Ambler yearbooks donated**
- **Wissahickon yearbooks needed**
- **WVHS looking for museum helpers**
- **Highlights of December’s speaker: Pearl Harbor**
- **Websites to help you research historic Philadelphia**
- **WVHS calendar for 2021-2022**
- **Welcome new members!**
- **The Quill (Bulletin) is coming**
- **Highlights from the Board of Directors’ meeting**

WVHS 1895 OPEN HOUSE: Sunday, November 7, 1-3 pm: A special exhibit about World War II, featuring items from our own collection and from private collections and other historical societies—canteens, uniforms, clothing, documents, and more. Access to the *King's Daughters' Newsletters*, monthly news (schools, sports, social events) about the Ambler area, sent to WWII service men and women. Look for the name of a friend or relative. **Please remember to “fall back” to Standard Time on Saturday night before the event.**

Recognition for “Revolution Road”: In 1777, Washington and his troops marched back and forth on Skippack Pike, right at our front door! WVHS is investigating how to obtain an official designation for what we are calling Revolution Road, the Patriots' route after the Battle of Germantown, up Skippack Pike towards Schwenksville. At the time, Washington was staying at Dawesfield, the home of Robert Morris, in Blue Bell on Lewis Lane. We hope to work with the other historical societies along this route, and we have already received guidance from the PA Representative Liz Hanbidge and the Museum of the American Revolution.



Dawesfield in a 2020 realtor's photo

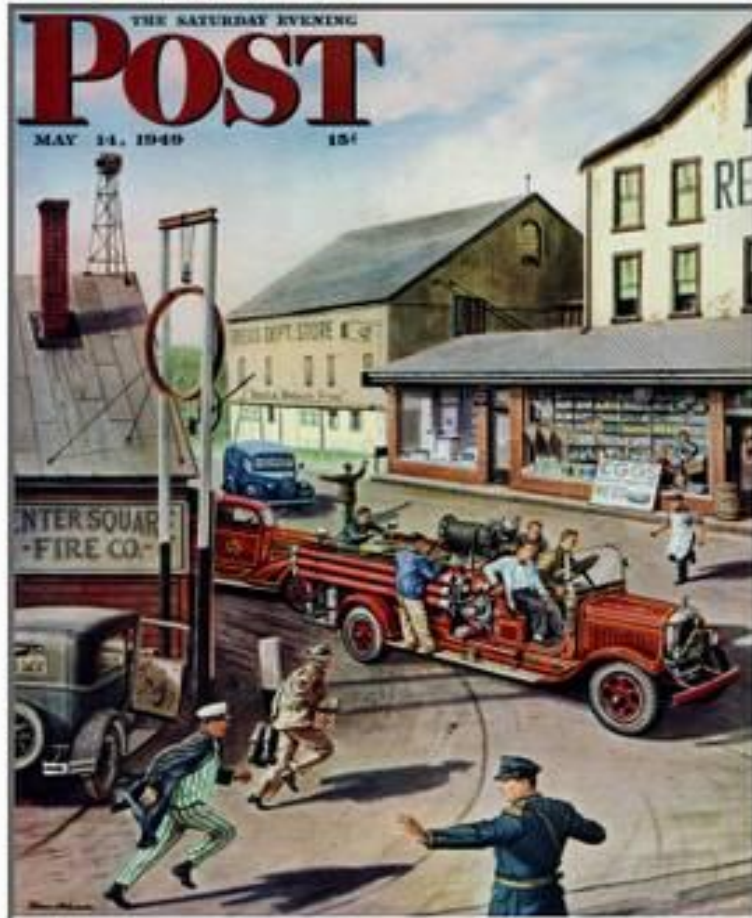
Dues--It's Time to Join or Renew: Our new Society Year began on September 1, and it's not too late to renew (or become a first-time member). Rates are low, just \$20. These small amounts add up to keep WVHS going. For details (check or credit card), please go to <https://www.wvalleyhs.org/get-involved/>

Using WVHS's New Grant Money. Help WVHS Find a Contractor: As announced in September, WVHS has received a second grant, this one for \$30,000, for work at the Franklinville School. This was great news; however, we are having trouble finding contractors willing to bid on fixing the Franklinville School's sagging front porch. If you know of a qualified person you would recommend, please let WVHS know: info@WValleyHS.org

Pandemic Affects the Holiday Party: Sadly, December's Holiday Party will not be held this year. Like the leaders of so many organizations, no one at WVHS could figure out how to wear a mask indoors and at the same time to enjoy the usual festive foods and drinks. And what's a party without those? So we look forward to warm weather and a grand WVHS picnic.

New to the Collection:

- Local historian Buck Amey--his collection of Ambler High School Yearbooks, a complete set
- Carol Jacob—a superb old “double” school desk
- Members Jean and Russ Bellavance—a candle mold and Jean's mother's doughnut cutters
- Member Kate Harper—a framed image of the cover of the *Saturday Evening Post*, depicting the Centre Square Fire Department and Reed's Store (corner of Skippack Pike and Dekalb Pike) in 1949 (pictured below):



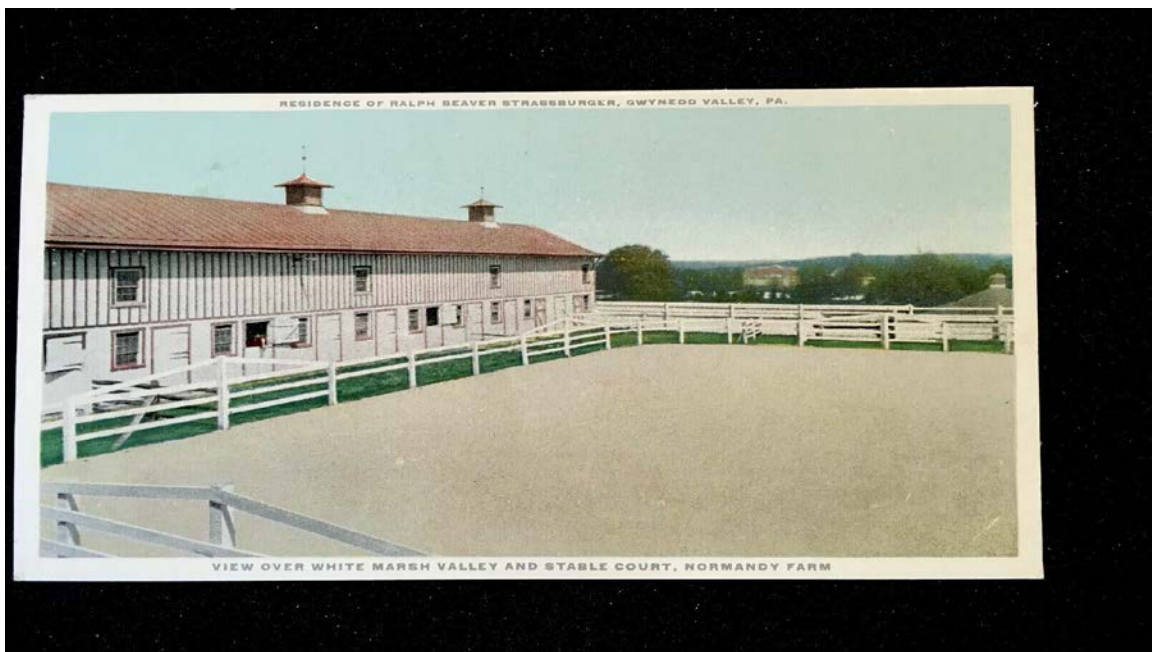
***Note the location of the Center Square Fire Company
across the street from Reed's Store***

Are you downsizing or cleaning? Is your trash really trash? If you have things fit for a museum, please consider donating to us. We especially need old photos of local places, such as homes, stores, schools, and the like: info@WValleyHS.org

Members Pass New Bylaws: On October 11, 2021, at a short business meeting prior to our speaker, Michael Jesberger, the members voted to accept the WVHS Bylaws recommended by the Board of Directors. President Carol Kalos described how the Board had debated a few issues each month for several months, consulted with Attorney Mark Ashton, a member, and arrived at new Bylaws which are clear and concise. In September, WVHS members received the proposed Bylaws by email, along with a one-page summary of the changes under consideration.

Cheerleaders Consult WVHS: A cheerleading team in Blue Bell contacted WVHS, asking for a suggestion for a Wissahickon or Whitpain mascot. With his keen sense of humor, Joe Langella suggested a pigeon, reflecting Blue Bell's former name, Pidgeontown. Other ideas arrived quickly, some more serious than others:

- An Ayrshire cow, to recognize what was called the great "Whitpain Herd," the 300 Ayrshires (black and white cows) who resided at Normandy Farm;
- A turtle, the symbol of the local Lenape clan and part of the tribe's creation myth;
- A thoroughbred racehorse, to recognize the champions from Normandy Farm:



The farm's most notable champion was Worden in Washington D.C. in 1953.

Wissahickon High School Yearbooks Needed: We are missing several issues of *The Ilium*, the Wissahickon High School yearbook. We still need for our collection the yearbooks for the Class of 1964, 1965, 1968, 1969, 1970, 1972, 1974, 1984, 1987, 1994, 1999, and all years after that (2000-2020). We especially need to see (not necessarily keep) books from 1969 and 1970 to respond to a researcher's question. These yearbooks are not available at the local library, so the WVHS is the only collection available to the public without a fee.

Ambler Yearbooks and magazines recently donated: Mr. Buck Amey has recently brought to WVHS a complete set of Ambler High School Yearbooks. WVHS can now showcase every year from 1929 to 1964, except for 1946. (Do you have a copy you wish to donate?) In addition, he has supplied us with an index to graduating seniors. WVHS also will store almost twenty issues of *The Pinnacle*, the Ambler High School literature magazine, starting from 1919.



Buck Amey with his complete set of Ambler High School Yearbooks.

If you have experience with museum work, please let us know. We are always looking for new ideas and ways to improve: info@WValleyHS.org

Michael Jesberger, Speaker on the Attack on Pearl Harbor: Jesberger's remarks were the kick-off to our special WWII exhibit to commemorate the attack of 80 years ago. He is an expert on the American Revolution and Civil War, and this was the premiere of his most recently-created presentation. Some highlights of his remarks are listed here:

- The attack occurred on December 7, and war was declared on December 8 after President Roosevelt addressed a Joint Session of Congress.
- In the year preceding the attack, Japan was deceptively talking peace with U.S. representatives.
- The attack was planned for a year, based on sending a large number of bombers at once to one target, an idea the Allies had successfully used earlier.
- The attack, including 6 aircraft carriers and 420 Japanese planes, lasted 110 minutes.
- New, colorized photos (previously seen only in black-and-white) show the horror of the explosions.
- Spies and code breakers warned of the attack.
- The radar system was new, and the military had little practice using it.
- Military leaders thought that Hawaii was too far from Japan for its planes to reach, and attacks were expected elsewhere in the Pacific, closer to Japan (at colonies of the Dutch, French, and British).
- Propaganda on both sides painted the other's leader as evil.
- After the attack, Americans favored the war.
- Despite the shock of the attack, it was not completely successful: The water was only 20 feet deep, so many sailors were rescued easily, and most of the U.S. ships were re-floated within 6 months and then quickly put back in service; the ships' repair areas were not destroyed, so they were immediately useful; the U.S.

aircraft carriers were not in port that day, so they were spared; the attack caused thousands of Americans to enlist.

- The U.S. got revenge at the battle of Midway.
- In the aftermath—the *USS Arizona* still leaks oil into the water. A national memorial stands at the site. Ships of all countries salute it as they pass!
- Members of the military who were present at the attack can qualify for the Pearl Harbor Commemorative Medal of Service.



USS Arizona Memorial Visitors Center

Researching Historic Philadelphia? Its Website offers some resources:

- Photographs--The Department of Records has over two million photographs dating back to 1855. Of these, 30,000 are accessible online at phillyhistory.org.
- Land records--PhilaDox is a land records research portal covering 1974 to the present. You can search documents for free and view watermarked copies. (You need a subscription to print.)
- The [Historic street index](#) allows you to search the name of a Philadelphia street and see its location and any name changes it has undergone.
- The [Historical land and vital records search](#) has digital images of:
 - Philadelphia deeds from 1683 to 1973
 - Birth, death, marriage, and naturalization records. (You must pay for a subscription to use the search.)

Mark Your Calendar with these WVHS Activities for 2021-2022:

- November 7** Sunday Open House, 1-3 pm: World War II special exhibit
- December 5** Sunday Open House, postponed due to COVID
- January** No meeting. Stay warm
- February 7** (Note **change of date** to avoid conflict with Valentines' Day)
Author Tamra Phillips will speak on the 100-Year History of the
Grace Baptist Church, celebrated in 2022
- March 14** Speaker to be determined
- April 11** Speaker to be determined
- April 24** Wine and Cheese Fundraiser (Sunday, 1-3 pm)
- May 9** WVHS elections and speaker to be determined
- June** Picnic

Welcome New Members (so far) for 2021-22:

- Alyssa Browning
- Janine D'Aniello
- Judy Eitzen
- Carol Jacob
- Margie and Phil Koller
- Danielle and Michael Porreca
- Ron Ruffner
- Ellen Schaible
- The Tourdot Family
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Coming Soon: *The Quill: The Bulletin of the Wissahickon Valley Historical Society*, Volume 1, Issue 1! Containing history research from our region. Are you a researcher and writer? Would you like to contribute? Let us know: info@WValleyHS.org

Highlights from the Board of Directors' October Meeting:

- Eighteen members volunteered to assist with the November 7th Open House event. Thank you for your help!
- The next member meeting is February 7, a week earlier than usual due to Valentine's Day. The speaker will be Tamra Phillips, an expert on the history of the Grace Baptist Church of Blue Bell, which will be 100 years old in 2022.
- Because we have grant funding, the Board is trying to get estimates for repairs at the Franklinville School. Contractors do not return our phone requests.
- WVHS volunteers staffed a table at each of the three area fall festivals. They spread the word about what WVHS does, and they brought in about ten new members.
- WVHS is planning a program (a lecture and/or an outing) with Wissahickon Trails.
- WVHS is investigating a new electronic filing system for its archive and museum collection.
- *America 250* will be celebrated on July 4, 2026, and events will be planned throughout 2025, leading up to that historic day.

If you would like to discontinue receiving the WVHS Newsletter, please click on "Reply," and mention your request.