

www.wvalleyhs.org

October 2021

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Welcome to the October issue of the WVHS Newsletter. Please note that our first Bulletin, coming soon, will contain the historic research articles which used to appear in the Newsletter. In this October Newsletter—now a monthly periodical-- you will find informative reading and important WVHS announcements:

- *October meeting is Monday, Oct 11, at 6:15, at Blue Bell Library with fantastic speaker on the attack on Pearl Harbor!*
- *Montgomery County creates new video about Franklinville School*
- *November 7th Open House will remember Pearl Harbor with WWII Exhibit*
- *WVHS 2021-2022 dues are payable*
- *Additional \$30,000 grant for Franklinville School!*
- *Announcing Name-the-Newsletter Winners*
- *Wine and Cheese fundraiser, April 24*
- *Notes from the September meeting: Election and Speaker (Historic Deeds)*
- *New items given to our collection*
- *Summary of the September Board meeting*
- *WVHS represented at our three community fall festivals*
- *WVHS activities: Save-the-dates in 2021-2022*
- *Suffragist presentation at Ambler Library, Nov 11*
- *America 250 and WVHS 50th... coming soon*

Announcing the October meeting and a special speaker: The meeting will be held on **Monday, October 11, 2021, starting at 6:15 pm.** A short business meeting will be followed by a speaker.

To allow for social distancing, the meeting will be held at the Wissahickon Public Library of Blue Bell (650 W. Skippack Pike). In keeping with Montgomery County COVID regulations, masks will be required, so no refreshments will be served. To protect our participants, the Board asks that all guests should be vaccinated.

Note that the meeting will begin at 6:15 with a very short business meeting, followed by our speaker, Michael Jesberger, a military historian. He has prepared a new presentation, in keeping with WVHS's remembrance of the anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor and how the United States entered WWII. To describe Jesberger, one website (Paoli Battlefield) states that "he is renowned for his depth and breadth of knowledge, as well as his engaging and passionate presentation style, whether providing formal lectures, living history presentations, or tours of historic sites in the Tri-state area." He is a re-enactor and lives in Lansdale.

See the new YouTube video about the Franklinville School! It was prepared by the Historical Society of Montgomery County to assist us with fundraising for the renovations. The video, now on the WVHS website's homepage, highlights the work still to be done and shows the inside of the historic one-room school:

<https://www.wvalleyhs.org/>

Save the Date: WVHS Public School's Open House on Sunday, November 7 from 1-3 pm. A friendly reminder—to protect everyone, masks, vaccinations, and social distancing will be required. No refreshments will be served. A special exhibit will feature the WVHS WWII collection along with items from private collectors. Members Joan Duxbury and Sally Zeller will provide access on the screen to the *King's Daughters* (Ambler First Presbyterian Church's) *1942-46 Newsletters*, and guests can ask Joan

and Sally to search for a family name. These newsletters were sent to service men and women, which included their replies. Here is a sample:

NEWS LETTER NO. 28... *January 12, 1945~ Another year has rolled around; we are entering upon our fourth year of war. Few of us would have believed on that Sunday in December back in 1941 it could have lasted this long. We realize now that the road to victory is hard - very hard. And long... they are fanatics you are fighting. You fellows are doing a titanic job, you who were dubbed by the Axis countries some years back as carefree, jitterbugging, undisciplined youths - too soft to fight....*

The publication with more detailed explanation is searchable and available on the WVHS website: <https://www.wvalleyhs.org/the-kings-daughters-wwii-newsletters/>

Dues are due for 2021-2022: The WVHS “Society Year” begins on September 1 of each year. The rates have not changed. For details, please see the separate notice you received on September 28th by email from Vice President (and Membership Chair) Joe Langella.

Franklinville School Receives Additional \$30,000 Grant: It is now official! Our previous grant, \$20,000 from the Keystone Communities Program, will be increased by another \$30,000 for additional renovations at the 1858 Franklinville School. Owned by WVHS and appearing on the National Register of Historic Places, it is furnished as a one-room schoolhouse.

Last year’s funds were used to install a new electrical panel, waterproof the foundation, and create a drainage system to eliminate water from the crawl space under the building. Next, the priority for the new funds is to rebuild the front porch. The building cannot be opened for visitors because the porch floor is rotted and unsafe.



The unsafe front porch at the Franklinville School

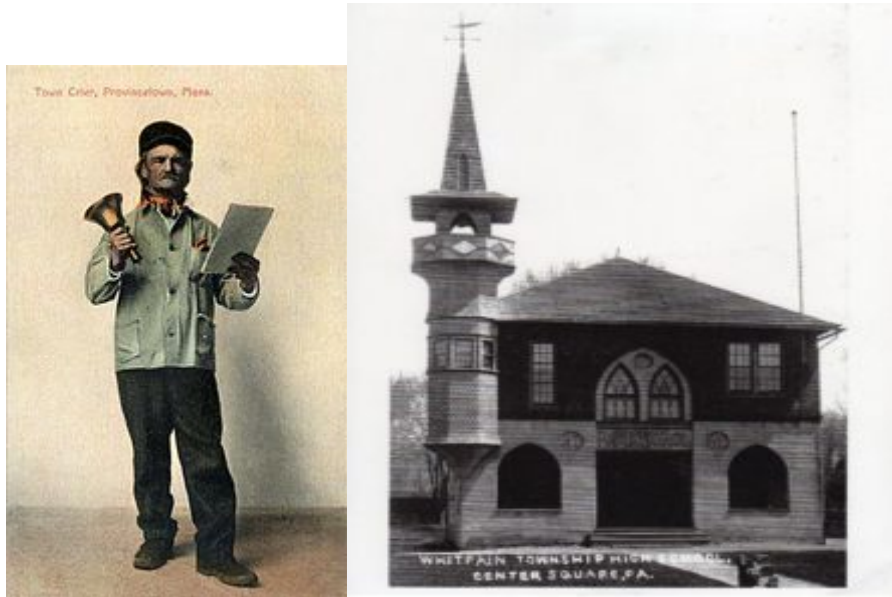
Winners announced for Name-the-Newsletter Contest:

Thank you to everyone who submitted a suggestion! Ideas were received from **Joan Duxbury, Gary Fuess, Marie Goldkamp, Beverly Hahn, Kate Harper, Donna Hartman, Ethel Hutchinson, Joe Langella, and Bruce Reeves.**

The *Newsletter* will be called “The Valley Crier,” a reference to the colonial town crier. He dressed elaborately, rang a hand bell, shouted “Here ye!” and then made announcements. The name was suggested by Vice President **Joe Langella**. The town-crier photo below is from 1909.

The more scholarly *Bulletin* will be called “The Quill,” a reference to the quill-shaped weathervane that used to stand on top of the 1895 School’s tower, itself a symbol of writing and thus learning! Sadly, the top of the tower was destroyed in a storm, and its whereabouts is unknown. Perhaps it was melted for scrap metal. The name was suggested by member and 1895 School-expert **Joan Duxbury**. See the photo below, showing the school’s quill-pen weathervane, taken about 1921. The WVHS website explains: “Originally the schoolhouse had a tall Gothic bell tower with a catwalk and a

quill weathervane. During a severe storm in 1923, the bell tower was struck by lightning and repaired shortly thereafter to the current Heptagonal [7-sided] Turret design. “



Wine and Cheese Fundraiser: Save the date for Sunday, April 24, 2022, 1-3 pm. Due to the pandemic restrictions, this event was moved from fall 2021 to spring 2022.

Notes from Our September Meeting and Speaker: WVHS follows Montgomery County guidelines, so about 25 individuals enjoyed the evening wearing a mask. Due to the pandemic, it was the first meeting of WVHS in 19 months. Past President Russ Bellavance was there with Jeanne. Having researched old deeds himself, he had much to add to the conversation, and audience members asked many good questions.

The evening began with the Election of officers. Interim President Carol Kalos explained that Russ Bellavance resigned as President at the beginning of the pandemic (spring 2020), and Mary Lou McFarland resigned as Vice President in fall of 2020 and stayed on the Board. The Board has continued to meet monthly for the past 13 months, first by Zoom and more recently in person. Our Officers and Board serve two-year terms. A

society year extends from Sept 1 to Aug 31, and elections are usually held in May, so WVHS has missed two elections. However, we are fortunate to have generous board members who continued to volunteer and give their time to WVHS.

Frank Russo, the first president of WVHS, nominated the slate of officers and board members for 2021-2022, who were elected. Board members are Mary Lou McFarland, Matt Metcalf, Charlie Miller, and Frank Russo. Officers are Carol Kalos, president; Joe Langella, vice president, Marie Goldkamp, secretary; and Tom Goldkamp, treasurer.

Vice President Joe Langella introduced the Speaker—Jeanne Sorg, Montgomery County's Register of Deeds and Mayor of Ambler, on "Researching Historic Deeds." She was amusing and presented real-world examples as she emphasized how...

- Deeds, legal descriptions of land, are available in Norristown, starting from 1784 when Montgomery County was formed out of Philadelphia.
- Sorg's office has records helpful for genealogists.
- Sorg's office is responsible for more than just deeds: It covers road plans, water plans, farm-preservation documents, military discharge records since the Civil War, and a register (in progress) of veterans' grave sites.
- Deeds show how a plot of land (not a structure) is bought and sold.
- Old deeds sometimes contain unusual facts, such as how a deed-holder died. They may mention debts, bankruptcy, and tax claims.
- Sorg's staff offers individual attention to help researchers who come to her office in person, such as deciphering old-style cursive handwriting or enlarging microfiche (but much work can be done online).
- All deeds are public. An index supplies information for no fee, but there is a charge for the actual data except for researchers who appear in person. (This policy prevents businesses from collecting landowner's addresses for marketing purposes.)
- The index, online, is difficult to use as a search-by-address, so researchers should use a person's name to find a needed "plot number."
- With a "plot number," researchers in most cases can follow the "genealogy" of a plot of land, tracing back in time to discover each previous owner. This process is

time-consuming because interesting facts for further investigation immerge during the search.

New Donations Added to our Collection: Thank you to Bernadette Dougherty for her contribution of a sports medal (see photo below), marked “BuxMont 1939 Mile Relay,” and several souvenirs from Ambler’s 1963 75th anniversary celebration: bow ties, wooden nickels, a “Peddler’s Permit” (badge), and a committee badge.



A Summary of the September Board of Directors’ Meeting:

- Several items discussed in detail are mentioned elsewhere in this Newsletter: the November 7 Open House, yearly membership dues, WVHS attendance at the three municipal festivals.
- WVHS continues to investigate designation of the Revolution Road, Washington’s troops’ route from the Battle of Germantown, past our front door.

- The Board is in the process of identifying speakers for the February, March, April, and May meetings.
- Field stones from the wall at the 1895 School were moved to the Franklinville School by Whitpain Township. How to use these stones was considered, but no decision was reached.
- The term of office for current Officers and Board will expire on August 31, 2022, so the next election will be held in May 2022. This election will correct the missed elections, caused by the pandemic.
- The Board recognizes that we will need more volunteers for various projects, especially when the pandemic restrictions are lifted.
- For the spring, the Board is considering one of several “outings” to a historic location.
- Whitpain Township is repairing a lighting problem in the garage. The Board appreciates the help.
- Newsletters for 2020-2021 will soon be available on the WVHS website. WVHS received an email from a genealogy association in the state of Indiana, inquiring about locating the newsletters.
- Due to an email question from a woman in California who was researching Marsden Glass, the Board stated a policy that it would allow sections of the WVHS website to be linked to other legitimate websites, in this case, the Museum of American Glass of West Virginia. When any link is made, it is quite important that the WVHS website be accurate. Our new stated policy is not to post long copyrighted passages on the WVHS website without permission and to site all borrowed material added to the WVHS website.
- The Board will support Bernadette Dougherty of Ambler in her effort to preserve the historic Ambler SEPTA Freight House.
- WVHS will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2025.

WVHS at Fall Festivals: President Carol Kalos and Vice President Joe Langella, assisted by board members Matt Metcalf and Marie and Tom Goldkamp, and members

Dot McDermott and Beverly Hahn, took turns representing WVHS at three annual community festivals: Whitpain Community Festival, Lower Gwynedd Fall Fest (formerly Pike Fest), and Ambler Oktoberfest. They promoted WVHS, became reacquainted with some of our present members, made contacts with prospective members, and discovered several individuals to interview about local history.





Important WVHS dates for 2021-2022 (Please note that COVID may cause changes to this schedule):

November 7	Sunday Open House, 1-3 pm: World War II exhibit
December 5	Sunday Holiday Open House, 1-3 pm (tentative! due to COVID)
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
April 24	Wine and Cheese Fundraiser (Sunday, 1-3 pm)
May 9	WVHS elections and speaker to be determined
June	Possible picnic?

Invitation to History Speaker from the Woman's Club of Whippain: The Woman's Club of Whippain has partnered with the Wissahickon Valley Public Library to host our local Carol Spacht to portray Dora Lewis, Suffragist, on Thursday, November 11, 2021, at the Ambler Branch of the Wissahickon Valley Public Library at 6:30 p.m. (In 2019, **Carol Spacht presented her Dora Lewis program for WVHS**, and it was amazing and inspiring!)



Two Reminders:

1) America 250 is coming in 2026! With events in 2025-2026.

2) WVHS will turn 50 in 2025!

Please send us your ideas as we plan events to celebrate throughout 2025:

info@WValleyHS.org



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