
Wissahickon Valley Historical Society ~ Volume 2, Number 2

The Valley Crier



Announcing—our speaker for February:

- On Monday, **February 7 at 6:30 pm** at the **Wissahickon Valley Public Library in Blue Bell.** (Note the location.)
- The church's member and its historian, Tamra Phillips, will present "A History of Whitpain Township's Grace Baptist Church (Founder of Temple University), on its 150th Year."
- Please note that this program is the first Monday of the month, not the usual second. The change-of-date avoids a conflict with Valentines' Day.
- Masks and vaccinations are required, Chairs will be arranged for social distancing.
- The meeting will end promptly at 7:45 because the library closes at 8 pm.



Whitpain's Grace Baptist Church, formerly the Baptist Temple on Broad Street

A Special Thank-you: A new WVHS member, Jen Zwetolitz, has volunteered to mail copies of *The Crier* and *The Quill* to members who do not use email. This is a time-consuming task, and the officers appreciate her help! Jen visited the WVHS archives recently because her family is new to the area, and she is researching the history of her property off Morris Road.

Writers Needed: We would like to hear your stories about the Wissahickon Valley. Consider writing for WVHS. If you have in mind an article for *The Crier* (happenings at WVHS) or *The Quill* (local-history remembrances or research), please contact WVHS with your idea: info@WValleyHS.org

Storytellers, a WVHS Committee: This is a group of citizens working to maintain the historic character Ambler's residences and businesses. They continue to add new members to their group, which meets on the fourth Tuesday evening of each month at 7 pm at the Ambler Public Library. They are planning two Walking Tours (with an Ambler restaurant "treat" afterwards) to engage people in learning more about their local history, and proceeds from the tour will benefit WVHS. The tours are being researched and prepared: Downtown and Asbestos. The group will also be highlighting a "building of the month" and calling attention to "adaptive reuse" success stories. At this month's Ambler Borough Planning Commission meetings, they would like to address how a property is designated as historic. Please offer your support! For further information, to join the committee, and to see a map of the section of Ambler that is threatened, go to the WVHS website at <https://www.wvalleyhs.org/committees/>.

We still need volunteers: Did you begin the year with a New Year's Resolution to do more to support your community? Or to get to know more people in your neighborhood? Or to figure out your local government? If so, then WVHS can supply you with

interesting volunteer “jobs.” If you are interested, please contact us:

info@WValleyHS.org

- At the Library’s “Municipal Collection,” create a list of topics and prepare an index
- At the Photo collection, create a list of topics and prepare an index
- At the Library’s “Children’s Collection,” prepare articles about the authors
- For an educator or artist--Use craft materials to create kids’ activities and/or present children’s programming
- Cleaning—take over larger projects, such as cleaning the blinds
- Accessioning—investigate each contribution, describe it, assign a collection number, send a thank-you note or deed of gift, and place the item in storage
- Textiles—refold them yearly and keep the closet organized
- Keep the items in storage closets (frames and documents) clean and organized
- Assist and/or be responsible for the display cases in four categories (4 or more people):
 - at the Wissahickon schools (elementary, middle, and high school);
 - at the Wissahickon libraries (monthly);
 - at the municipalities (change displays four times per year);
 - at the 1895 School.

Public Library Display Cases: WVHS has been presenting a month-long exhibit at the new display case at the Wissahickon Valley Public Library in Ambler. Topics have included

- For November, World War II: Remembering Pearl Harbor;
- For January, The History of Banking: Items from our local banks;
- Planned for February, “A Teen Romance...in 1777”: *Sally Wister’s Journal*; and
- Planned for March, The history of locally-made (green) Marsden Glass



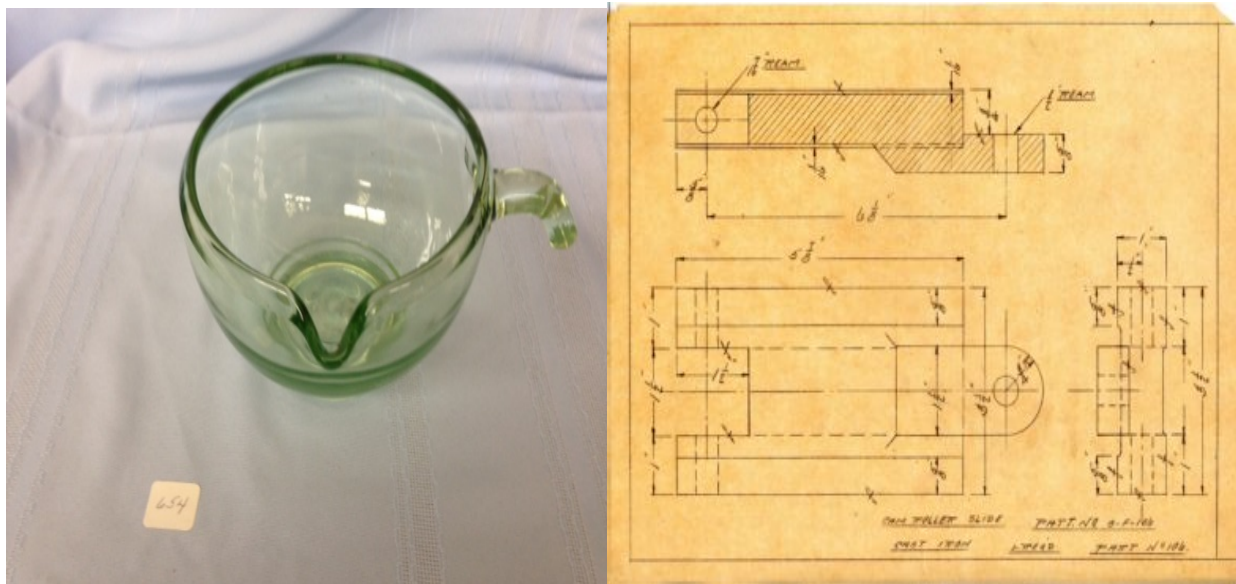
In December, WVHS presented a display of some of our World War II artifacts and documents at the Wissahickon Public Library in Ambler

Welcome to our New WVHS Members who joined in January:

- Todd Smith
- Michael Frost & family
- Bernadette Dougherty
- Zbigniew Bieniaszewski

More Accessions: WVHS has in storage nine boxes of Marsden Glass items, most of them never accessioned, so Peg Johnston and a volunteer have taken on the task. The company began in 1924. The amazing collection was donated to WVHS by former

president Frank Russo. To see photos of some of the glass and the technical plans on its manufacture, go to <https://www.wvalleyhs.org/j-e-marsden-glass-works/>.



Marsden Glass—a local 1920s product and the plans for its manufacture

On the WVHS “Wish List”: WVHS is planning for summer. The officers would like to purchase a canopy to use for WVHS outdoor events, such as the street festivals. A 12-foot canopy with our WVHS logo would cost about \$500. If you are interested in donating this purchase (or donating towards it), please let us know. We appreciate your support!

1895 Library and Archive Open by Appointment: If you are doing research and would like to use the WVHS books and other sources, please contact us for an appointment: info@WValleyHS.org



Hundreds of sources are available at the WVHS Library and Archives

The Quill is coming! ...for Presidents' Day. Here are excerpts from its four articles:

On the quill (pen and weathervane): In Whitpain schools, “the [1895 School’s] Master had charge of sharpening the quills and of making the ink. Ink was made from a material called Ink Powder and kept in a large bottle and dealt out into the pupils’ cork inkstands, which had small glass inserts in their centers. The quills were tied together in bunches of 24, 50 and 100, and sold by the Master to the pupils at the price of 2 for a cent.” (*Whitpain...Crossroads in Time*, 1976)

On Ambler Borough: “In the gay [18]90s, it was fashionable to see the show at the [Butler Avenue] opera house and afterward visit the stores in the building ... Ambler also had the outdoor bandstand ... located ... across the street from the opera house”

(Ambler, 1888-1963). And today, [Butler Avenue] offers ... history, education, dining, and arts and culture Most importantly, Ambler invites not just local shoppers; it attracts visitors from the entire Delaware Valley and beyond.

On Lower Gwynedd Township: The residents fought to save Penllyn Woods from development—a historic David versus Goliath battle that ultimately preserved 55 acres of woods and trails. One resident has a million stories about Penllyn Woods, and each of those stories begins with a recollection of family and community. “We grew up in the woods,” she says. “My dad was a hunter, [and] unlike most people who got to shop in the grocery stores, we ate what my dad brought home from the woods. When you’re poor, that’s what you do.”

On Whitpain Township: The history of Grace Baptist Church, on Skippack Pike, has left a significant impact on our community. It began in Philadelphia in 1872 in a tent, and it grew to what was at one time the largest Protestant church in the United States, then called Baptist Temple, the foundation of Temple University and Temple Hospital.

Wissahickon Valley Historical Society~ Volume 1, Number 1

The Quill



Highlights of the January Board of Directors' Meeting:

1. Although paper copies of WVHS publications will be mailed to members who report no email address, to save funds and the environment, the board prefers to send *The Village Crier* and *The Quill* by email.
2. Our collection includes much about agriculture, but little about business and industry. An effort will be made to obtain more business history from our area.

3. Forms for the two state grants for the Franklinville School have been submitted and are at various stages of review.
4. A Wine and Cheese fundraiser is scheduled for Sunday, April 24, but it may have to be cancelled due to mask restrictions. An Open House may be substituted.
5. Speakers and other programs have been scheduled for this society year through June, and several speakers have already been invited for next year, beginning in September.

- **Upcoming WVHS Events:**

- March 14--Jenn Bilger, Executive Director of Wissahickon Trails, "Connect with the Wissahickon"
- April 11--Mark Ashton, lawyer and longtime WVHS member, will talk about the Golden Age of Piracy in the Americas and muse about how a class of people -- noted mostly for rape, robbery and other hanging offenses-- are still celebrated by Pittsburgh & Tampa Bay sports franchises.
- April 24--Wine and Cheese Fundraiser on Sunday, 1-3 pm, **OR** 1895 School Open House, depending on COVID restrictions
- May 9--WVHS elections and speaker to be determined
- June--Picnic--Date and location to be determined

- ***Also being planned:***

- For April or May, a demonstration, sponsored by Wissahickon Trails, of the Evans-Mumbower Mill
- For spring, a get-together at Bluestone Country Club

We are an all-volunteer organization. Although receiving funds from occasional grants, WVHS depends on our generous donors. Please support us!

WVHS works to promote and preserve the history of Ambler Borough, Whitpain Township, and Lower Gwynedd Township: www.WValleyHS.org.

If you would like to discontinue receiving *The Village Crier* from WVHS,
please choose "Reply" and mention your request.