

# ***Did You Know We Live in Franklinville?***

## Normandy Farm's Big House on the Corner

### **around town**

By **Carol Kalos**, St. Andrews resident writer and  
Wissahickon Valley Historical Society President

That white house on the corner inside Normandy Farm's stucco walls was once the Franklinville Tavern. At Morris Road and today's Dekalb Pike, the dwelling was built in 1834 by John and Catherine Heist, who operated it as an inn along the then-new road connecting Norristown and Doylestown. Mrs. Heist's family, the Leverings, had owned the land since 1730.

In the mid-1800s, Blue Bell Country Club's section of Whitpain Township was named Franklinville after the Heist's hotel. Franklinville also contained a blacksmith shop, large farms, and a school. In 1858, the one-room Franklinville School was built along Morris Road to accommodate the area's children. Today, the Franklinville School (owned by the Wissahickon Valley Historical Society) and Normandy Farm appear on the National Register of Historic Places.

The land for the Franklinville Tavern has changed hands only four times. The Leverings passed the tavern to the Heists, and after Mrs. Heist's passing, the Heist children sold the inn and the acreage around it to William Singerly.

In 1898, the Singerly property was broken up and sold. In 1901, a famous botanist from the University of Pennsylvania purchased the house and barn, and in 1913 he sold them to the wealthy Ralph and May Strassburger. Naming their land Normandy Farm, they acquired more acreage to grow enough crops to feed their huge "Whitpain Herd."

In 1923, the history-loving Strassburger's renovated what was once the Franklinville Tavern, adding to the house while keeping its original materials, and it became their Colonial Revival style "manor house."

Today the Manor House, now the corporate headquarters for Normandy Farm Hotel and Conference Center, still welcomes visitors to our area as the Franklinville Tavern once did.

*Carol Kalos, a resident of Saint Andrews Place, is the Wissahickon Valley Historical Society president. It has obtained a grant to repair the front porch of the Franklinville School mentioned above. The project is financed in part by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Keystone Communities Program, and, to complete the work, donations are welcome! For information about the society's events, please go to [www.WValleyHS.org](http://www.WValleyHS.org).*



Normandy Farm manor house, AKA as Franklinville Tavern. View from the intersection of Route 202 and Morris Road.



Manor house behind the wall



Date stone at manor house