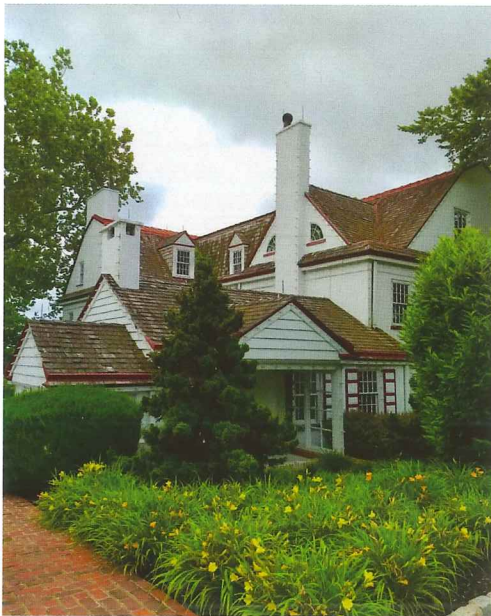


# Franklinville School's Connection to Normandy Farm



The back of the manor house at the corner, once the Franklinville Tavern, where Franklinville School got its name.



The historic Franklinville School, once serving the Normandy Farm tenant farmers' children, reminds us to appreciate our area's rich history. Photo by John Kellar Photography, LLC

Normandy Farm can trace its beginnings to 1730. The house at the corner of Dekalb Pike and Morris Road was built in 1834. The structure became the Franklin Tavern, a rest stop for travelers between Doylestown and Norristown. Thus this section of Whitpain Township became known as Franklinville, and it is still welcoming guests today at the Normandy Farm Hotel and Conference Center.

The Normandy Farm, with its white stucco walls and its thatched-roofed, arched gates, trimmed in red, looks French because its owners, Ralph and May Strassburger, were so wealthy that they also owned several estates in France.

The Franklinville School was built in 1858 to satisfy parents who demanded a local schoolhouse. The school district bought an acre of land on Morris Road from the farm to build the one-room school. It was used until 1916, when the district built a new school

on Skippack Pike, now the Blue Bell Korean Presbyterian Church.

The Strassburgers purchased the school to use it for the education of Peter, their only child, calling it "Peter's School." Later they used the school as a movie theater for their farm employees and as a center for community events. After Ralph Strassburger died in 1959, the farm land was gradually sold off (with some of those acres later becoming Blue Bell Country Club). Then, the Franklinville School stood unused, and it deteriorated.

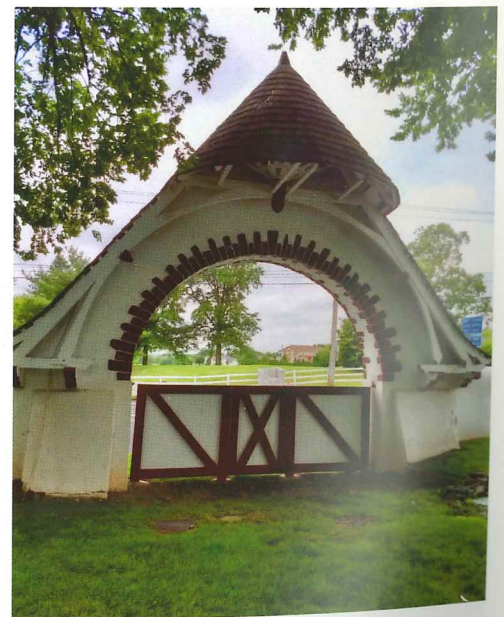
(Read in next month's *Blue Bell's Finest* about how, in the 1980s, the Franklinville School was saved, but how it again needs major repairs.)

Today, the Normandy Farmstead (the Strassburgers' house, barn, and outbuildings) and the nearby Franklinville School each appear on the National Register of Historic Places.

A Keystone Communities grant has helped to solve the Franklinville School's water drainage issues, but the historical society still needs to replace the roof and the porches,

add HVAC, and then paint, inside and out. Thousands of dollars are needed!

**To find out more and help save this local treasure, please visit the society's website: [WValleyHS.org](http://WValleyHS.org). Carol Kalos, Saint Andrews, serves as the interim president of WVHS.**



French-style arched gate with thatched roof at Normandy Farm. BBCC appears in the background.