
Wissahickon Valley Historical Society ~ Volume 2, Number 6

The Valley Crier



Please Mark Your Calendar:

- Due to the new COVID warnings, the June 13 WVHS picnic has been postponed. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention advises that masks be worn indoors at all times due to the county's high COVID-19 Community Levels. The Board of Directors will search for a later date to schedule the picnic.
- June 23 (Thursday) – A Members Party with a Reservation at Bluestone Country Club. Please enjoy a tour and complimentary reception. The optional tour will be indoors, so bring a mask; the reception is outdoors. Due to limited space, WVHS has sent an email with details to paid members only. For non-members who wish to attend, it's not too late: The membership application is online at <https://www.wvalleyhs.org/get-involved/>
- September 14 (Wednesday) at Noon—Dedication of the historic Milestone, preserved by the Centre Square Fire Company. When construction work began on Route 202, the volunteer firefighters moved the historic Milestone from the front of their property (on Skippack Pike) to keep it safe. It has been reset, and the fire company and WVHS are planning a small ceremony to honor its remarkable story and its return to the neighborhood.
- The next WVHS Open House at the 1895 Public School is planned for Sunday, October 28, 1-3 PM. It will feature the WVHS Amchem collection.



Another local Milestone, this one on Morris Road, stating “18 miles to Philadelphia”

Historical Society of Montgomery County Exhibit: The Society's special exhibit, "*Grandma's Attic*," just launched. It is free and open to the public; and it will run through March 30, 2023.

Antique Firetruck at 1895 School's Open House: WVHS welcomed visitors from near and far as about 45 guests toured our museum. Several visitors moved slowly through the exhibits, reading every description and looking carefully at every object. Among the special items on display were fantastic pictures from an Archives box, marked "Misc. Photos..."; a 1907 dress, to be described in the next issue of *The Quill*; a 1948 wedding gown, mentioned below; a lady's night gown; and documents describing

the *Norristown Times-Herald*, owned by Normandy Farm's Ralph Strassburger. They revealed how the newspaper's historic headquarters building was recently demolished, and they included a commemorative issue of the newspaper.

A high point of the day, drawing several neighborhood children and their parents, was Centre Square Fire Department's antique fire truck, parked in the front yard. It was driven by firefighter Joe Bradley, son of member Neal Bradley. Two men from North Carolina said they flew into Wings Field, spotted the truck, and were thrilled to discover a local museum!



Centre Square Fire Company showing off its old firetruck at the 1895 School's Open House, April 2022

Among the noted guests at the Open House was member E. Gloria Stewart Jones, who literally "wrote the book" on the history of Penllyn. In fact, both her book, *Penllyn Village*:

Lest We Forget (2008), and her biography are featured in the WVHS museum's Lower Gwynedd display case. Her bio states that she is a third-generation descendant of early Black immigrants to Penllyn Village, and that she was a professor of nursing at Gwynedd Mercy College. Now retired, she reported that she spends much of her time sorting through several generations' worth of her memorabilia. In addition, she has been chosen to serve on the Lower Gwynedd Township Historic Committee, which advises the Board of Supervisors.



E. Gloria Stewart Jones, an admired and talented WVHS member, visits the Open House

A New Museum Acquisition Coincides with April's Open House Exhibit, the Wedding Gown: Recently WVHS Secretary, Marie Goldkamp, contributed to WVHS the art catalog from a 2005 Woodmere Art Museum exhibition. Entitled *The Martinos: A*

Family Legacy, the book previews the artistic style and content of the four members of the talented Martino family: Giovanni, Eva, Nina F., and Babette. The “Introduction” of the book states that the “exhibition [showed] ... one of America’s most talented families of painters ... [with a] level of achievement [that] is both impressive and inspirational.” The artists’ biographies mention that Giovanni and Eva married in 1948, and the family lived in Blue Bell. Daughter Nina donated Eva’s ivory satin wedding gown and wedding shoes to WVHS, and coincidentally the items were exhibited, along with the couple’s stately wedding portrait, at the April Open House! Then it was discovered that the WVHS records incorrectly says that the wedding items were from 1938 while Nina and Babette were born in 1952 and 1956 respectively. The later wedding year seems more accurate, so WVHS has made the correction to its records.



Open House Display--Dress, Shoes, and Portrait from the Wedding of Two Blue Bell Artists, Eva and Giovanni Martino

Who Mows the Lawn at the 1895 School? Ever wonder how this happens? The Whitpain Township graciously mows (and plows snow) for us. Thank you, Whitpain Township! In addition, those lovely potted flowers are planted by member Dotty MacDermott.



Whitpain Township, Preparing to Mow the 1895 Lawn

Board Member Resigns: Matt Metcalf, the Board's newest member, has turned in a letter of resignation, stating, in part, "When I commit to an organization or activity, I want to be able to follow through-- with excellence and, if possible, panache." He goes on to say that he thinks WVHS and its board are easy to work with and doing worthwhile things. As a result, he will stay on to complete his volunteer commitments. WVHS will continue to call on his advice as a professional historian and preservationist. Many

thanks for his contributions! WVHS appreciates his time, knowledge, and genuine panache!

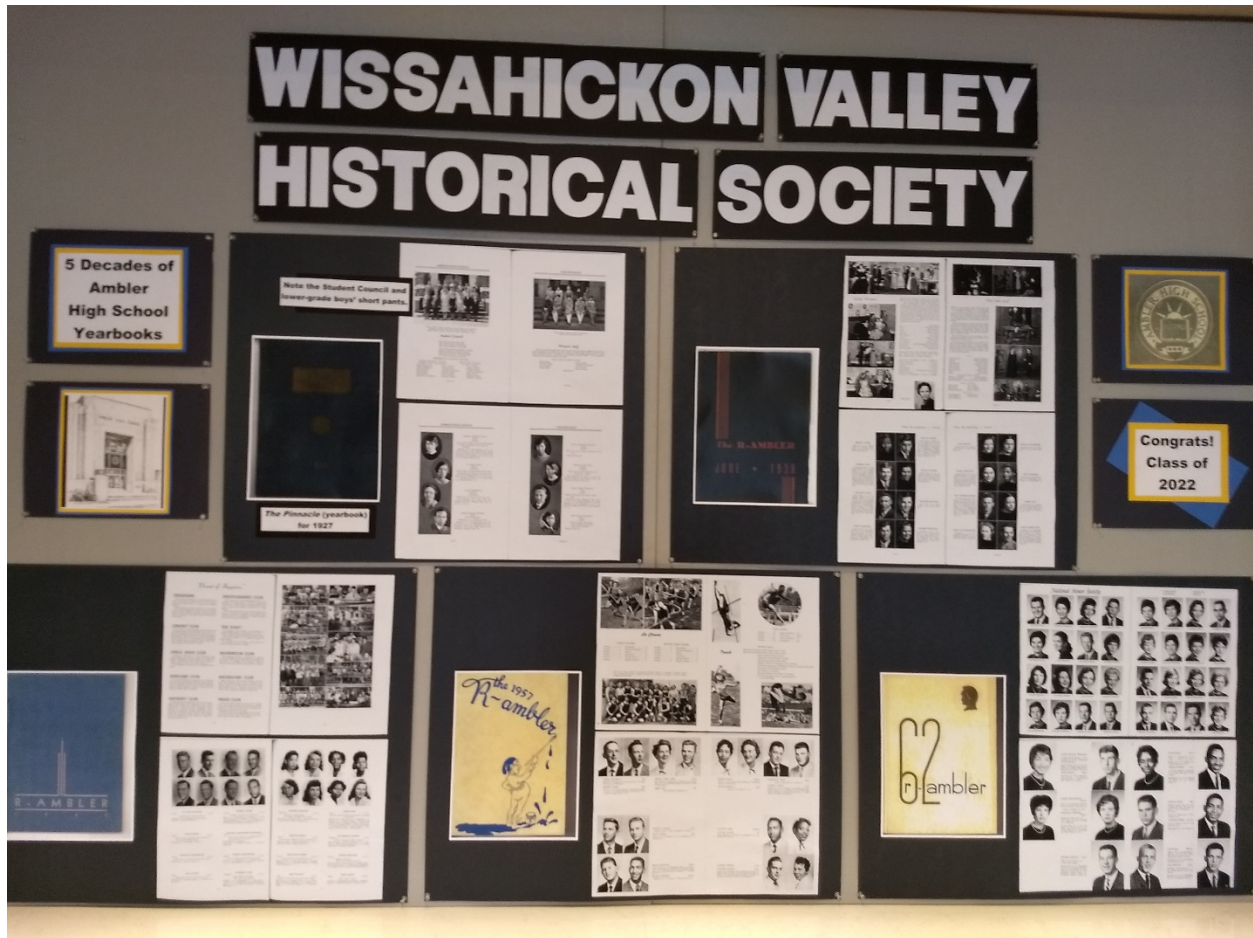
WVHS Election Held at the May Meeting: Elected for a two-year term, which will begin on September 1, 2022, are President Carol Kalos, Vice President Joe Langella, Secretary Marie Goldkamp, Treasurer Tom Goldkamp, and Board Members Mary Lou McFarland, Charlie Miller, and Frank Russo. Each Society Year starts on September 1, and the members elect officers in May of even-numbered years.

May Meeting Finds a Great Substitute Speaker: Our scheduled May speaker was forced to cancel just days before the meeting, so Russ Bellavance suggested one of his colleagues at Delaware Valley College as a substitute. Thus the college's former professor of microbiology, Jim Miller, spoke about Typhoid Mary. But his was not a dull science lecture; it offered many laughs. For example, he pulled out a large meat cleaver to demonstrate how Mary successfully resisted arrest for transmitting the dread disease. He explained that Mary Mallon (Typhoid Mary) came alone from Ireland to the United States in 1884 at the age of 14. She found work as a cook, but evidently did not know about the connection between handwashing and the spread of disease. Authorities chased her because she left typhoid in many of the households where she was employed over several decades. Miller also pointed out the social bias of the times. She was finally sent to a lonely island exile because she was Irish, an immigrant, and a woman. (Jeff Marshall, from the Heritage Conservancy and the Historic Barn and Farm Foundation of PA, will be rescheduled to speak to WVHS about historic barns in our area during our next Society Year.)

WVHS Presentation at Rotary Meeting: At the invitation of Rotarian and WVHS member Kate Harper, the society's Vice President, Joe Langella, spoke at the May Rotary meeting about WVHS and the importance of preserving our precious local history.

May's WVHS Display at the Ambler Savings Bank: To mark graduation month, WVHS offers congratulations to the area's 2022 graduates by showing off examples of

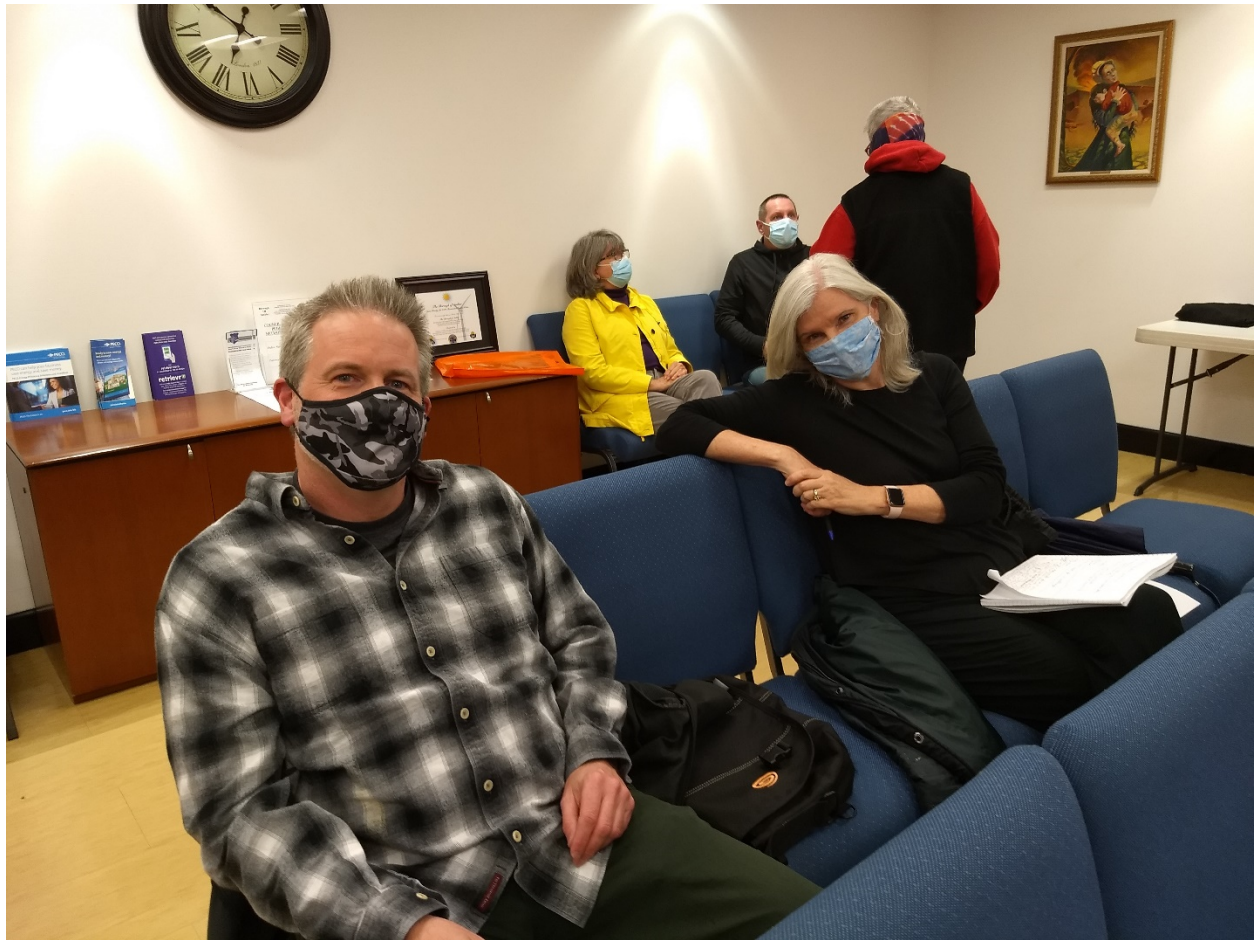
its complete collection of Ambler High School Yearbooks. The display includes photos and information about the old building (long gone) and the school's traditions, and the display presents select yearbook pages from each of the five decades the high school existed.



WVHS presents sample pages from five decades of its Ambler High School Yearbooks

Ambler Storytellers: After several months of discussion, the Ambler Planning Commission has sent a recommendation to its Borough Council regarding the proposed content of its "demolition ordinance" to be overseen by the Zoning office. It will call for a 90-day delay on demolition of any of the borough's pre-1935 buildings. One phrase heard during these meetings is "Would you chain yourself to the door to save this building?" Thus, because a demolition cannot be stopped (the current proposal), the

commission is relying in part on public opinion to protect Ambler's old buildings. The Ambler Storytellers will continue to encourage appreciation for Ambler's historic properties (and save them) by providing guided tours of the borough. Tour guides are needed! For more information about the tours or the new ordinance, please email to amblerstorytellers@gmail.com



Ambler Storytellers prepare for a Planning Commission Meeting (Feb. 2022). Pictured are Michael Frost and Mary Spross. In the background are Bernadette Dougherty, Zbigniew (Zibi) Bieniaszewski, and one other.

Tips for Researching Your House: The National Trust for Historic Preservation has offered a new website with advice for how to find out about your old home:

https://savingplaces.org/stories/preservation-tips-toolshomep-10-ways-research-homes-history#.WYS6_oTyvcs

Thursdays' volunteer time at the 1895 School: Due to the increase in COVID cases, these "work sessions" continue to be delayed. They will be held from 11 AM until 1 PM. Stay tuned for a date to start.

WVHS Library, Archives, and Museum are open for researchers "by appointment." Please email to info@WValleyHS.org

Evans-Mumbower Mill Will Host Open Houses in June and August: It rained on the day WVHS was to visit the mill, but two other dates will be available. WVHS members are always welcome at the mill, and they are excused from the requested donation. Watch this page for updates: <https://wissahickontrails.org/events/evans-mumbower-mill-open-house>



The Evans-Mumbower Mill with its outstanding blacksmithing display. Member Matt Metcalf interviews the blacksmith.

The PA State Historic Preservation Office: WVHS has been notified that the PA SHPO has determined that the proposed additional height to Ambler's cell phone tower "has no effect on historic properties." Several months ago, Ambler's WVHS members were surveyed for comment about this construction.

Volunteer needed: A volunteer is needed to prepare the local history display at the Ambler Borough Building three times a year. For details, email to info@WValleyHS.org

Welcome to Our New Members:

- Carol Stuart-Buttle
- David Scott
- E. Gloria Jones
- Neil Stein
- Michelle Mayer
- John Harmer
- Robert and Carol Jones
- Diane Schueler
- Barbara and Keith Carroll
- Alyson Amsterdam
- Eric and Carol Faddis
- Dick Target

Highlights from the Board of Directors:

1. When parents pick up their children at Blue Bell Elementary School, drivers are creating a short-cut across the grass from School Road to the school's parking lot.
2. A board member will present a history award on behalf of WVHS at the high school's Wissahickon Senior Scholarship Night.
3. The board will meet in September to do long-term planning.
4. For the first grant, all requirements have been met, except we still need to obtain the insurance certificates from the two contractors. Work on the Franklinville School's porch (the second grant) should begin in about six weeks.
5. The board is researching a temporary banner for the 1895 School's front yard.

Proposed Dates for the next Society Year, 2022-2023:

- Sep 12 Speaker Matthew Kalos, PhD, Anthropology Professor at Brookdale College: on archaeology and the Battle of Paoli
- Oct 17 Tom Wiekowski, PhD, Chair of the Cheltenham Historical Commission and Vice-President of the Old York Road Historical Society: on his new book about three generations of the Barkers, influential 19-century bankers
- Nov 14 Jeff Marshall, retired President of the Heritage Conservancy and President of the Historic Barn and Farm Foundation of PA: on his book, *Barnstorming in Eastern Pennsylvania & Beyond*
- Dec 12 Holiday Party
- Jan No Meeting
- Feb 13 Show and Tell?
- Mar 13 Steve Tull, Vice President of AECOM: on Archaeology in Center City Philadelphia
- Apr 10
- May 8
- Jun 12 Picnic

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

We are an all-volunteer organization. Although receiving funds from occasional grants, WVHS depends on our generous donors. No amount is too small.

Please support us!

Many people like to include a gift to charity in their will or estate plan to support causes that are important in their life. Please consider including a gift to WVHS to benefit the promotion and preservation of our local history for future generations.

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