

THE UNUSUAL FUNDING OF WHITPAIN'S 1895 PUBLIC SCHOOL

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The 1895 School at the corner of Skippack Pike and School Lane is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It serves as the headquarters, museum, and library for the Wissahickon Valley Historical Society.

The building, considered expensive and fancy in its day (and today mostly original), had no central heat or indoor plumbing. It cost \$3,698.54. Six horse stalls cost \$239.99; the wall in front and the grading cost \$231.82; so the total project cost \$4219.85. The school board cut the salaries of the six teachers in the district from \$45 to \$40 per month to defray the great expense! This salary scale was maintained for ten years (nine months per year), indicating that the teachers' contribution was \$2700 towards the new school building. The first principal during this time was William D. Beyer.

The school used the first floor for the first through eighth grades and the second floor for high school classes until 11th grade. Then students who chose another year of high school attended either Norristown or Ambler High School for their final year.

By the 1920s, the school had an active Alumni Association. They held an annual Christmas party on the second floor of the building and in early June a picnic supper and games on the school grounds. Later a PTA took over most the school's social events. All high school activities ceased in 1950 when they were moved to Ambler High School.

Read next month about how the building's purpose changed over the decades.

Author Carol Kalos is a resident of Saint Andrews and President of the Wissahickon Valley Historical Society. Monthly speakers are free and open to the public. For an appointment to see the displays or for further information, please go to www.WValleyHS.org.

