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**Announcing our September events!**

**Bernadette Dougherty will speak about the Deck's Hardware Family at our September Meeting:** Our society opens its new Society Year on **Monday, September 11, at 7 PM**, at the 1895 School with an outstanding speaker, Bernadette Dougherty. Her topic will be "The Decks Family: 100+ Years of History in Ambler." The Decks have been the owners of a remarkable Ambler business, Deck's Hardware, since 1908!

Dougherty is one of our historical society's best volunteers! The book *Legendary Locals of Ambler* (Quattrone 2015) describes her as "Miss Persistence" for her devotion to improving Ambler and its history. As a professional and as a volunteer, she has become a "fixture" of the area, helping businesses, and preserving historic buildings (including the train station and the Ambler Theater)!

When asked to describe her activities, she writes, “I have worn about every hat there is to wear in Ambler: property owner, Mom, Grandmom, Ambler history buff, Councilperson, Caretaker of the Ambler Train Station buildings, Shopkeeper, Landlord, Main Street Manager, Tax Collector, and Real Estate agent. It has been pretty darn exciting living here these past 47 years!” Dougherty is a former WVHS board member, and she is presently an active member of Ambler Storytellers (a WVHS committee), offering Ambler tours and working to preserve the Ambler Train Station’s Freight House.

Light refreshments will be served. All meetings in 2023-2024 are scheduled for the 1895 School.



***Ambler's "Deck's Hardware," 1908-2023***

**1895 School “Open House,” Sunday, September 17, 1-3 PM:** A special Woolworth’s theme, featuring the collection of WVHS Past President Frank Russo. (Including a server uniform from the Ambler Woolworths!) Don’t miss this one!

### **The Next Evans-Mumbower Mill open house—August 13, 1-4 PM**

**Bellavance to speak at library:** WVHS Past President Russ Bellavance will speak at the Wissahickon Valley Public Library, Blue Bell, on Thursday, August 17, at 2 PM. He will describe how historic deeds tell a story, using selected deeds in the WVHS collection as examples. Some of the beautiful hand-written deeds will be available for guests to see up close.



**An Addition to the recent *Quill*:** *The Quill* is a WVHS publication sent three times each year to WVHS paid members. (If you did not receive your copy, please notify [info@WValleyHS.org](mailto:info@WValleyHS.org).) The most recent issue contains an article by Frances Morris Treisbach about her family, the renowned descendants of Anthony Morris. She grew up in Centre Square, and she

has offered readers an interesting addition to her narrative about her family house: “I only wish that 1475 Skippack Pike still had its original double doors. A recent owner replaced them. Double doors were necessary on a house this old, so that funerals could be held at home and the coffin taken away for burial. The last funeral held at the home was in September 1944 for Ella Woolston Morris, my great-grandmother. Her remains are interred at Boehm's Church.”



***1475 Skippack Pike, A Morris Family Home***

**Whitpain Township Installs Smoke Detectors at the 1895 School:** On the three hottest days in July, electricians installed smoke detectors on all

three floors of the 1895 School. For the first time, an alarm will be sent to the township's central station. Thank you, Whitpain! The project involved running conduits across the ceilings of the historic building. The electricians report one bonus to the job: they have enjoyed reading about the objects in our display cases.



***Fire Alarm System Being Installed in the Basement, 1895 School***

**Thank you note from student:** Our Wissahickon High School history scholarship recipient, Abe Matisoff, writes to WVHS, saying "... I am excited to continue my historical education, and I am very thankful for the support you have given me along my journey. Thank you."

### **Montgomery County Planning Commission Promotes Historic**

**Preservation:** The county recently sponsored an online seminar to encourage the county's municipalities to look for historic preservation opportunities, including zoning ordinances and recognition by the National Register of Historic Places or the Pennsylvania Historic District Act. 77 people participated, including interested citizens, including WVHS.

Speakers explained how preservation offers many benefits, and it is a myth that it requires restrictions. To get started, *the county encouraged each municipality to create a historic commission* to preserve the buildings they care about. This action can provide tax benefits, preserve character, encourage economic development, help small businesses, create a sense of place, and improve the quality of life.

**Are the Milestones Limestone or Sandstone?** Board member Barry Johnson is curious about the make-up of these historic roadside markers. Does anyone know the answer to this question? He has supplied the photos below.



***“18 Miles to Philadelphia,” the milestone located on Morris Road***



***A close-up photo of a Milestone***

**Milestone Event Held Last Year:** About a year ago, WVHS honored Whitpain Township and the Centre Square Fire Company for their work to preserve the fire station’s historic mile marker. The following, by George S. Peck, summarizes some of the information: According to *Milestones and Highways around Philadelphia* by Fred Perry Powers (1922), colonial

highways leading out of Philadelphia were all measured "from the so-called Golden Milestone, at the old Court House at Front and High Streets."

These first milestones were laid out and paid for in 1764 by the "Philadelphia Contributorship for insuring Houses from Loss by Fire."

Milestones were of significant help in keeping the post riders up to their schedules. Benjamin Franklin, Deputy Postmaster General at this time, appreciated the value of milestones in expediting the postal service. [Some writers say this idea is a myth because postal riders knew their routes!]

In the Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary period, the areas above Philadelphia, including Whitpain, were sparsely populated, with great distances between houses. Powers states: "In sending and receiving letters and in public documents the milestone nearest the dwelling was mentioned. When General Washington had his headquarters at Dawesfield during the Whitpain encampment, he headed his letters 'Skippack Road, 15th milestone.'" Actually, the 16th milestone ... is closer to Dawesfield. One marker in Whitemarsh Township is ... [special] ... because it includes a date (1768).

**Why are barns red?** *Smithsonian* (April 2021, page 84) responds, "Because of stardust." According to NASA, "red paint was once cheaper than other colors because its color came from iron, an element that is plentiful in Earth's crusts and was forged in the hearts of stars.... Farmers mixed [red] rust with linseed oil to protect their barn's wood."

**"Old Images of Montgomery County, PA"** (posted in 2021 on Facebook): See hundreds of photos of our area. A brief description of each image

appears on the upper right:

<https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=336991306391999&set=a.336909643066832>

**All Pennsylvania Grant-Activity Is Stalled Due to the Lack of a Budget:**

WVHS cannot complete its latest HARC (Historical & Archival Records Care) grant, and it is waiting for its funding for last year's grant.

**WVHS Needs Your Help:** Have fun, connect with others, feel a sense of purpose! New committees will be forming in September. *Your time is valuable, so share it.* If you have a special interest or skill, please let WVHS know: [info@WValleyHS.org](mailto:info@WValleyHS.org)

**Volunteer Days will resume in September:** Volunteers are welcome on Thursdays, 11 AM until 1 PM, at the 1895 School. We will be cleaning in preparation for the Open House, scheduled for September 17.

**A dues announcement will be emailed to you in September.** Our society's "Society Year" is like a school year: it begins in September. As you pay your dues, please remember that we are underfunded and struggle to meet the duties of being proper stewards of the historic resources in our area.

**There was no Board of Directors meeting in July.**

**Planning for 2023-2024 Events:**

- **Throughout the year**—WVHS will promote NRHP for Ambler. Stay tuned.
- **Volunteer Days** (Thursdays), 11 AM until 1 PM, at the 1895 School. Help is needed with cleaning and archiving.
- **First meeting for 2023-2024--- Monday, September 11 @ 7 PM:  
Bernadette Dougherty on Deck's Hardware Family**
- **Sept 17, Sunday 1895 Open House, 1-3 PM—Woolworth's theme**
  - Oct 9, Lisa Minardi, on the Muhlenbergs
  - Fall Outing, being planned
  - TBD, Open House at Franklinville School
  - Nov 13 Megan McNish, from PA SHPO (State Historic Preservation Office)
  - Dec 11, Holiday Party
  - Jan 8, Show 'n Tell [NOTE corrected dates for 2024, below]
  - Feb 12
  - Mar 11
  - Apr 8
  - TBD—spring Open House, Eli Moniz, painter
  - May 13 (second Monday in May) Election of Officers
  - June 10, Picnic

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***WVHS works to promote and preserve the history of Ambler Borough,  
Whitpain Township, and Lower Gwynedd Township.***

***We are a member-driven, all-volunteer, non-profit organization.  
Although receiving funds from occasional grants, WVHS depends on  
our generous donors. No amount is too small. Please support us!***

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