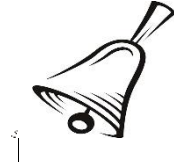


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*Wissahickon Valley Historical Society ~ Volume 3, Number 1*

# *The Valley Crier*



*September 2023*

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## **Announcing Two September Events!**

WVHS opens its new Society Year on Patriots' Day

**Russ Bellavance will speak on Lafayette's Farewell Tour  
at our September Meeting:**

Monday, September 11

7 PM

1895 School

*Light refreshments*

## ***LAFAYETTE'S FAREWELL TOUR as The Nation's Guest***

In 1784, the Marquis de Lafayette returned to America as a representative of France. He spent a week at Mount Vernon and then departed from his



beloved George Washington, expecting to return again soon.

Events intervened, including the French Revolution, and Lafayette did not return again until 1824, when Congress and President Monroe begged the Hero of Two Worlds to make a final farewell tour.

### **Open House at the 1895 School:**

#### **Featuring a Private Collection about Woolworth's Lunch Counter.**

Past President Frank Russo (with Joan Duxbury's help) is showing off hundreds of items, including an Ambler Woolworth's waitress uniform and Woolworth's dishes and serving ware. He is including some prized dishes used at a South Carolina lunch counter during a 1960 Civil Rights' Sit-In!

As a fund-raiser, **lunch-counter dessert and coffee will be served.** Please enjoy the treat and make a donation. **Join us on Sunday, September 17, 1-3 PM, at the 1895 School.**



**September 1<sup>st</sup> Begins the WVHS “Society Year.”** Just like the school year, WVHS starts in September, and that means that **DUES ARE DUE!** Checks can be made out to “WVHS” (\$25 for an Individual; \$35 for a Couple) and mailed to “P.O. Box 96, Ambler, PA 19002.” Please keep in mind that the WVHS dues alone do not cover our expenses. *Now is a good time to include a contribution with your dues.* Every bit helps!

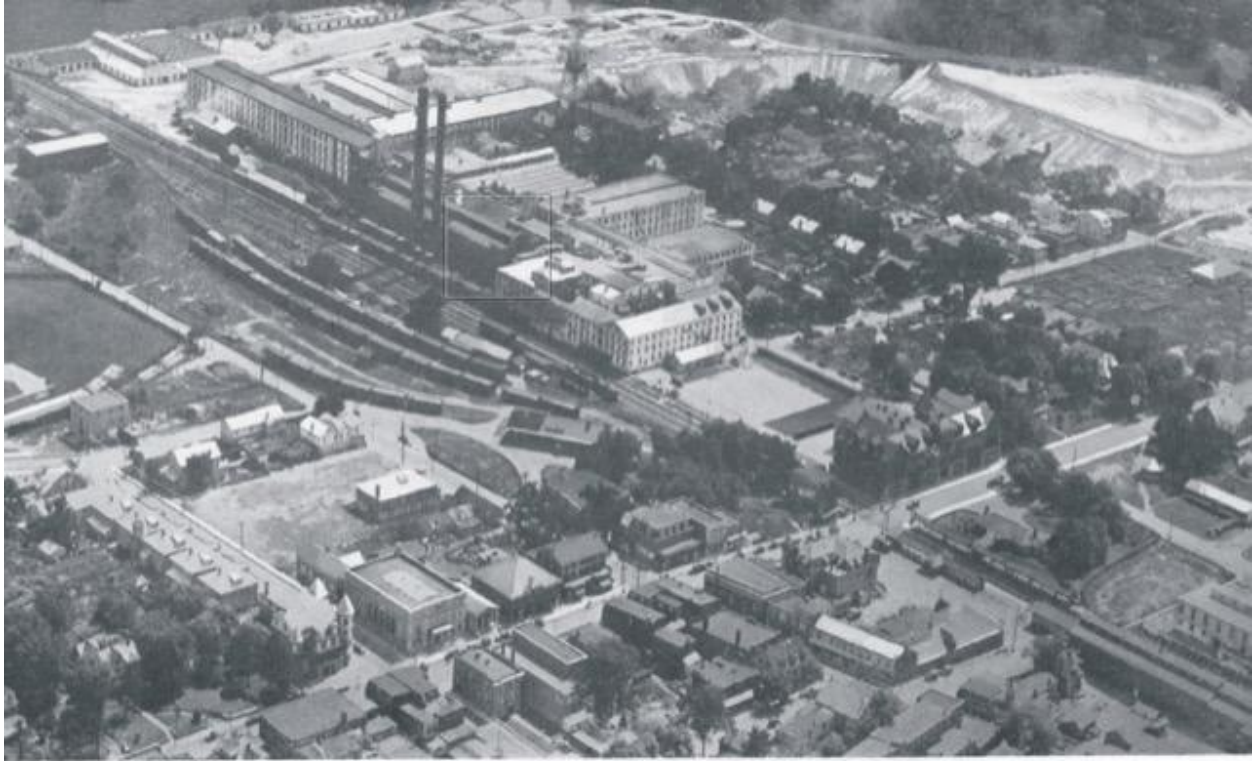
To save postage costs, **WVHS will NOT SEND a separate dues reminder by U.S. Mail.**

**WVHS at Local Fall Festivals:** Please stop to say hello (or **please volunteer to help**)!

- *Lower Gwynedd Township*, (Sat.) Sept 23, 12-5 PM at Houston Road
- *Whitpain Township*, (Sat.) Sept 30, 12-4 PM at Montgomery County Community College
- *Ambler*, (Sat.) Oct 14, 4-10 PM at Kohler Soccer Fields

To volunteer, please send an email to [info@WValleyHS.org](mailto:info@WValleyHS.org)

**Ambler Storytellers’ “Eligibility Letter” Completed:** For part of Ambler Borough to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places, Ambler Storyteller Mary Spross and President Carol Kalos have completed the first step in the long process of recognition. (Ambler Storyteller Zibi assisted them from his job in Europe!) They met every Tuesday evening during the summer to complete this preliminary step. The Eligibility Letter asked for maps, photos, Ambler history, a comparison of Ambler to other towns in the area, and more. The group is applying for Ambler’s history to be recognized as unique because it was a “company town” during the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when Keasbey and Mattison’s asbestos manufacturing dominated the economy. The next step will include a visit to Ambler from PA SHPO representatives. (Photo below from Andrew Hubley, Environmental Consulting, Inc.)



*Aerial View of Ambler Plant of Keasbey & Mattison Company—probably the World's largest Asbestos Textile Mill*

**Is the National Register of Historic Places Misunderstood?** From AASLH : The National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers has issued a report on how we recognize our historic places, with attention on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). NRHP is often misunderstood and has not been widely used to recognize places of importance to many Americans whose history, sites, buildings, and neighborhoods may have been intentionally or unintentionally overlooked or not considered. [Read the report.](#)

**Wild Fire Destroys Maui Historic District:** The loss of a rich history is profound. The town was a favorite port for Hawaiian kings and queens, whaling ships, and Christian missionaries. At the center of the fires lies the [Lāhainā Historic District](#), designated a National Historic Landmark in 1962, and once serving as the capital of the Hawaiian Kingdom.

**Fallen Tree at Franklinville School:** Sadly, an old Silver Maple tree has died, toppling into the neighbors' trees. The trunk is hollow and has been leaning for years. The Board of Directors has hired an arborist to remove the tree and complete additional tree trimming at the property.



*Fallen Silver Maple at the Franklinville School, August 2023*

**No State Grants This Year:** Due to the PA Legislature's delay in approving the budget, state grants have been cancelled for the coming year. Although the budget has been passed, not enough weeks remain to process the applications and administer the funding.

**Short articles about the history of Whitpain Township are available on the WVHS website at *Stroll Blue Bell*:** <https://www.wvalleyhs.org/blue-bells-finest/>

**A Call for Cleaning Volunteers:** WVHS has its first speaker on Sept 11 and an Open House on Sept 17, so we need to look presentable for our guests. Please offer to assist: [info@WValleyHS.org](mailto:info@WValleyHS.org)

**Special Thanks:** WVHS sends a big thank-you to Sally Zeller, Joan Duxbury, and Barry Johnson for leading the way to make the Franklinville School and the 1895 School look ship-shape to start the fall season! Every year, they each spend hours cleaning and organizing.

**Many Thanks for Cleaning:** Barry Johnson spent a Monday in August washing the porch floor at the Franklinville School, no easy feat considering that there is no running water there. He hauled in six gallons, and he

reports that he could have used more. His work with Spick and Span looks...



spick n' span!

### **Volunteering for a Meaningful Task--How to overcome loneliness:**

[https://www.psu.edu/news/health-and-human-development/story/qa-what-can-we-do-about-loneliness-epidemic/?utm\\_audience=Combined&utm\\_source=newswire&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=Research%20headlines%20issue&utm\\_content=06-01-2023-09-12&utm\\_term=Stories%20-%207](https://www.psu.edu/news/health-and-human-development/story/qa-what-can-we-do-about-loneliness-epidemic/?utm_audience=Combined&utm_source=newswire&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Research%20headlines%20issue&utm_content=06-01-2023-09-12&utm_term=Stories%20-%207)

**What stone was used to create our local milestones?** WVHS asked our readers about what kind of stone was used to make our local milestones. Local historian and member Tamra Phillips was curious, so she did some research. One article she found, written by the Lower Merion Historical Society, explains that the milestones along the Main Line roadways are made of granite. And another article she found indicates that the milestones are made of different materials, depending on where they



were located (and who placed them there). Our question remains if our local milestones are sandstone or limestone. Anyone know?

**Dedication of Mary Ambler's New Grave Marker:** Members of Mary Ambler's family and a small group of WVHS guests met at the Gwynedd Meetinghouse Cemetery across from the William Penn Inn on August 18 to mark 155 years since Mary Ambler's death and to dedicate a new headstone for her. The informal ceremony resulted from Linda Green, Mary's third great-granddaughter, discovering that the former marker had been damaged. Vice President Joe Langella welcomed the guests, including Ambler Mayor Jeanne Sorg. President Carol Kalos described how Mary became a local hero for her role in caring for the injured after the Great Train Wreck of 1856, the nation's worst train accident at that time. Kalos also explained that those present would remember the ceremony although Mary Ambler, as a Quaker, would be appalled at any ritual or recognition. Each guest placed a button at the headstone to show their honor for Mary Ambler. A full transcript of Kalos' remarks will appear in the next issue of *The Quill*, sent to WVHS paid members.



***A simple wooden bowl of buttons, each to be placed at the Gwynedd Meetinghouse Cemetery to honor Mary Ambler on the anniversary of her death***

**Recently Accessioned:** Frances Morris Treisbach sent the society several interesting items from the Morris family. Most notable is the walking stick, pictured here. She writes that it belonged to “my grandfather, Courtlandt S. Morris. He was the local Justice of the Peace from 1920 until his death in 1938. He succeeded his father, John Morris, who was Justice of the Peace until he passed away in 1920. The ‘courthouse’ was in the living room at our home in Centre Square [1475 Skippack Pike, purchased by Courtland in 1912].”



## History Photography Contest for Montgomery County Residents:

### Photography Contest

The County is extending the deadline for their photography contest from now until Tuesday, September 12, 2023. All Montgomery County residents are invited to participate in this contest for **America250PA Montgomery County**.



This year's theme will be Montgomery County's Historic Sites; to be eligible for the contest, photographs must be taken at a county, state, or national historical site, historical marker, and/or park in Montgomery County. MontCo residents participating in this kick-off contest may submit one entry per household in one, two, or all three categories for pictures taken from July 1, 2023, until September 12, 2023:

- **Youth:** MontCo residents ages 10-18 are encouraged to get out, explore, and take a picture at a historical site to capture something they find interesting. Entries must be submitted on behalf of the young photographer by a parent or guardian.
- **Historical Elements:** Capture a photo of the unique architectural, art, technology, or cultural element from a historical site. Open to ages 19 and up.

- **Natural Beauty:** Photographers entering this category are encouraged to find that perfect shot of anything that captures nature's beauty at one of the historical sites. Open to ages 19 and up.

You can learn more about how to enter, download the entry form, and learn more at this website:

[America250PA Montgomery County Photography Contest | Montgomery County, PA - Official Website \(montgomerycountypa.gov\)](#)

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#### **Items from the August Board of Directors' Meeting:**

- The board is supplying refreshments for the September 11 meeting.
- WVHS will investigate the plans for Whitpain Township's new recreation center. It may provide space that our society could use for events.
- Programs for the year are still being planned.

#### **Calendar of Events, 2023-2024:**

- **Throughout the year—** Volunteer Days (Most Thursdays), 11 AM until 1 PM, at the 1895 School. Help is needed with cleaning and archiving.
- **Monday, September 11, at 7 PM, WVHS Past President Russ Bellavance on Lafayette's Farewell Tour**

- **Sept 17, 1-3 PM, Sunday Open House—Special Exhibit from WVHS Past President Frank Russo: Woolworth’s Lunch Counter**
- **Oct 8, 1-3 PM, Franklinville School, Sunday Open House (weather permitting)**
- **Oct 9, 7 PM, Lisa Minardi, PA German specialist, on The Muhlenbergs**
- **Fall Outing, To be announced**
- **Nov 13, 7 PM, Megan McNish, PA SHPO (PA State Historic Preservation Office), The Effects of Historic Preservation**
- **Dec 11, 6:30 PM, Holiday Party**
- **Jan 8, 7 PM, Show n Tell**
- **Feb 12, 6:30 PM, Dr. Friederike. Baer, Penn State Professor and author of new award-winning book, *Hessians: German Soldiers in the American Revolutionary War* (at the Blue Bell Library)**
- **Mar 11, 7 PM, To be announced**
- **Apr 8, 7 PM, Robert Harley, His Family’s Boxwood Farm and His Grandfather, Dick Harley, Professional Baseball Player**
- **TBD—Spring Open House, Eli Moniz, painter**
- **May 13, 7 PM, Bernadette Dougherty, “The Deck Family: 100+ Years of History in Ambler” and Election of Officers**
- **Patron’s Party, To be announced**
- **June 10, 6:30 PM, Picnic**

*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!*

*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.**

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