
Wissahickon Valley Historical Society ~ Volume 3, Number 4

The Valley Crier



*****Holiday Party at the 1895 School! Please Respond:*****

- For WVHS members and a significant other
- Monday, December 11
- 6:30 PM (Note the start time)
- POTLUCK, so please bring finger foods or desserts
- BYOB---WVHS will supply beverages and paper goods
- Bring items ready to serve (for example, on a platter)
- Bring the serving utensils you will need
- RSVP to info@WValleyHS.org to let us know you are coming
- Available to set-up or clean-up? Let us know: info@WValleyHS.org
- If you have not paid your 2023-2024 WVHS dues, please pay at the meeting (\$25 per individual or \$35 per couple/family).



An antique sled at the 1895 School

Members Give Franklinville School A New Roof: On November, Russell Roofing removed the leaking roof at the 1858 Franklinville School and replaced it with a fine, new roof. Asphalt shingles replaced the old, curling, cedar shingles because the replacement materials cost WVHS half as much and will last twice as long as a cedar roof. The change does not affect the status of the NRHP; the building looks the same. The funds for the new roof came from contributions from our members and the community, accumulated by years of saving. Other repairs made earlier in the year (a new front porch with a new roof) were paid for through a Pennsylvania grant. The school still needs a new back porch and painting, inside and out.



A New Roof Replaces a Leaking Roof at Franklinville School, November 2023

Freight House Still in Danger: In October, WVHS learned that SEPTA intends to demolish the 1855 Freight House, located at the old Ambler Train Station. It is part of a trio of buildings, including the delightful La Provence and the former location of Bussinger Trains and Toys.

Bernadette Dougherty, a former board member, is leading the charge to try to save the Freight House. At present, she is **raising funds to hire a Preservation Engineer, who will evaluate the Freight House's broken timbers and suggest how the damage under the building can be repaired.**

(Go to **"Make a Donation"** on the WVHS website: www.wvalleyhs.org/get-involved) After the fund-raising effort is established, Ambler Savings Bank has promised to contribute \$5000 as a matching gift. SEPTA states that they would have to pay over \$350,000 to fix the structure, and they want repairs done quickly because the structure may fall onto the tracks. Thus, a priority is raising funds to hire the Preservation Engineer!

Bernadette is selling Christmas ornaments depicting the old Freight House (a limited printing), and she has arranged for Ambler's Tannery Run Brew Works to create a batch of "Freight House" beer with the proceeds going to save the Freight House. Buy a round or two! Details about the Freight House project are posted regularly on the WVHS website:

www.wvalleyhs.org/committees/

(Please see the ornament, below. Quantities are limited. Order by emailing to info@WValleyHS.org)

Side 1



Side 2



To purchase ornaments, please email to info@WValleyHS.org

Ambler Storytellers Continue Walking Tours: A Walking Tour is scheduled for Saturday, December 2, at 3 PM (following the parade). Participants will find a new appreciation for the history and architecture of Ambler's Butler Avenue. Additional tours will be scheduled for springtime and warmer weather. To register for a tour, go to the WVHS website: www.wvalleyhs.org/visit-us/



Ambler's Gypsy Blu, formerly the Wyndam Hotel

Putting Ambler on the National Register of Historic Places: Three representatives visited Ambler on November 3 to see the town's historic buildings and to suggest the boundary lines for the proposed historic district. The group, hosted by Ambler Storytellers Mary Spross and Bernadette Dougherty, walked through Butler Avenue and Main Street, drove around the streets containing the hundreds of K&M-built houses, and, after the tour, assembled cordially at for lunch at Ambler's Pie and Plate Cafe. These officials will discuss their Site Visit and then issue a "Determination of Eligibility."



***Mary Spross and Bernadette Dougherty, November 2023,
prepared to show off Ambler's history***

PMAC Speaker Details PA's Work: The WVHS November speaker was Megan McNish, who works for the state's historic preservation office, PA SHPO, a bureau of the PA Historical and Museum Commission. She stated that the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 created the National Register of Historic Places. She explained the benefits of protecting old buildings: creating a sense of identity and pride and creating a community's economic health. (It helps small businesses, housing variation, support of the tax base, better transportation, and using local materials and labor.) She pointed out that the best way to protect an old building is with local designation, using zoning ordinances and a Historic Architectural Review Board. As a result, her final message was to elect local officials who want to support preservation.



Megan McNish explains the benefits of preserving historic buildings, Nov. 2023

New Archives' Boxes Arrive: Thanks to our HARC Grant (funding from PA's Museum and Archaeology Commission), many sturdy grey boxes have arrived at the WVHS library, and volunteers are busy labeling boxes and filing away our rare books to keep them safe from dust, light, and

moisture. Among those books are 1900s scrapbooks and initiation records from the local Odd Fellows Lodge, especially interesting since they list each candidate's occupation. More archive boxes are needed to preserve fabrics, such as the three military uniforms contributed last year. These large boxes cost over \$50 each! For more details or to donate, please email to info@WValleyHS.org.



***At the WVHS Library's Archives, some of the old books,
soon to be stored properly***

Thermostat Causes Issues: It was chilly for the November meeting, but the thermostat has been repaired, and the 1895's heating system is working nicely once again. With the help of Whitpain Township, WVHS is prepared for the winter months ahead.

New "History Census" lists 21,588 of the country's history museums, historical societies, and related organizations. See the website to learn much more at "History Organizations 2022 National Census":

<https://aaslh.org/census>

The Museum and Library at the 1895 School are open by appointment:

Here's a way to entertain your out-of-town guests. Take a private tour.

Please email your request to info@WValleyHS.org

Writers are welcome to add to *The Quill* and *The Valley Crier*: Please send your ideas to info@WValleyHS.org

Welcome to Our New WVHS Members:

Carolyn Dabney-Tatko

Anne Bakken

Donna and Bob Kreamer

Melania and Paul Capone

Ruth Chang

Liesl Woelfel

Date and Place Set for WVHS 50th Anniversary Party: We are planning ahead! In 2025, WVHS will be 50 years old, and we want to host a great celebration! *Save the Date* for a Luncheon on Sunday, September 14, 1-4 PM, at the William Penn Inn in **2025**. (2025 is not a typo.)

From the Board of Directors:

- Joe Langella reported that the Lower Gwynedd Historic Advisory Committee (HAC) presently has no chair, so its members are sharing the responsibilities.
- Charlie Stewart of Inhabit Media has volunteered to help WVHS by taking photos of historic buildings.
- Frank Russo will investigate the details of a WVHS outing to Historic Trappe. Carpooling is being considered.
- Barry Johnson has continued to experiment with a dehumidifier at the Franklinville School.

Calendar of Events, 2023-2024:

- **Throughout the year—** Volunteer Days (most Thursdays, 11 AM until 1 PM, at the 1895 School)
- **Dec 11, 6:30 PM, Holiday Party, BYOB and Potluck**
- **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 Ambler Library)**
- **Spring Outing, possibly to Historic Trappe, TBD**

- Mar 11, 7 PM, To be announced, a program with Lower Gwynedd Township (Exciting details to follow!)
- Apr 8, 7 PM, Robert Harley, His Family's Boxwood Farm and His Grandfather, Dick Harley, Professional Baseball Player
- TBD—Spring Open House, Elli Moniz, painter
- May 13, 7 PM, Bernadette Dougherty, "The Deck Family: 100+ Years of History in Ambler," Election of Officers, and a special tribute
- 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.
