

# The 1916 “Consolidated School,” Whose Students “Rocked the Bus”

BY CAROL KALOS, WISSAHICKON VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY PRESIDENT

As Blue Bell Country Club residents drive east on Skippack Pike, on the left, after School Lane, they see three schools: first, the 1895 Public School, now a local history museum; second, what is presently the Blue Bell Korean Presbyterian Church (1916); and third, the Blue Bell Elementary School (1955). In 1966, Whitpain Township School District changed its name to join with Ambler Borough and Lower Gwynedd Township to form the Wissahickon School District.

In 1916, with new state requirements, Whitpain built the two-story, red brick structure as an elementary school, called the “Whitpain Township Consolidated Public School.” As a result, the district closed the area’s six neighborhood schools. *Whitpain...Crossroads in Time* (1977) describes the original building as having “four large rooms; two on each floor [with] two classes ... held in each room. The basement contained ... offices ... and bathrooms, with indoor-plumbing-of-sorts.”

In the 1920s, a playground area extended “all the way back to the woods,” where the younger children played

games and the high school students played organized sports. In 1927, an addition was made to the building, creating an auditorium and a basement cafeteria.

When the 1916 Consolidated School opened and the area’s six elementary schools closed, the school district purchased its first school bus, a Ford, Model “I.” The same source relates how the students would “rock” the bus. “When too many students sat in the back of the bus, the front wheels left the ground!”

**Carol Kalos is president of the Wissahickon Valley Historical Society. Its headquarters, museum, library, and archives are located in the 1895 Public School, mentioned above. The society also owns the one-room Franklinville School on Morris Road. Both buildings appear on the National Register of Historic Places and are open by appointment. Contact [info@WValleyHS.org](mailto:info@WValleyHS.org).**

