
Wissahickon Valley Historical Society ~ Volume 3, Number 10

The Valley Crier

July 2024

WVHS Fundraiser at Gwynedd Hall's 200th Anniversary: Gwynedd Hall, located at 1295 Meetinghouse Road, North Wales, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places for its rich history and outstanding Greek Revival architecture. To mark the grand home's 200 years, its owner, former WVHS board member Matt Metcalf, has generously offered to open his home to the historical society for two fundraising activities, set for the weekend of September 13-14-15.

If you would like to serve on a committee, please email to info@WValleyHS.org. The group will hold its first meeting next week at Gwynedd Hall to outline the details of the events.

June Picnic Ends the Society Year: About 25 members and their guests came together to enjoy good food and conversation at the society's year-end (indoor) picnic at the 1895 School. The group also visited the second-floor displays, part of the art-meets-history exhibit from the spring Open

House and a special exhibit in the library of vintage local maps. (A common question from visitors to our museum is who lived on my street in 1900.) Many thanks to Sally Zeller and Joan Duxbury who cleaned to get ready for the event and then oversaw the details of the festivities!



Old Map Books, Showing Sections of Ambler Borough, Whitpain Township, and Lower Gwynedd Township, on Display for the WVHS Picnic

Franklinville School's Sign Gets Restoration: On Thursday, June 27, the old sign at the Franklinville School was brought back to life. Board member Barry Johnson has been working on the project since the fall of 2023 when Neal Bradley and his son, Joe, did a beautiful job of doing carpentry work. (See *The Valley Crier*, November 2023.) Then Barry stabilized the old posts, and he and Steve Vereb of Verco Painting repainted the sign, matching the prior paint color. Remounting the heavy sign was no easy task.

Steve kindly volunteered his time and painting expertise for this project. (Thank you, Steve!) The sign's deep-red color, also the color of the school's shutters, coordinates with the buildings at Normandy Farm. (For several decades, the property was owned by the Strassburgers, who owned Normandy Farm. They also had two estates in France, so their color choices reflect what was common in Normandy).

The Historical Society of Whitpain, featured on the sign, formed in 1983 to save the 1858 school. The group merged with WVHS in 2015.

Joan Duxbury, always helping with a WVHS project, stopped by and took some pictures, some shown below.



The 1980s sign in the fall of 2023, prior to being restored



Board member Barry Johnson and volunteer Steve Verco after completion of the Franklinville School's newly-restored sign

***Philadelphia Inquirer* (Sunday, June 30) features WVHS members:**

Zibi and Kasia Bieniaszewski of Ambler [Whitpain Township] are featured ... by the *Philadelphia Inquirer* in an article titled “Turning yards into sustainable pollinator gardens.”

The Bieniaszewskis’ split-level property features manicured lawns, sustainable gardens, three beehives, and a sign that reads: “Whitpain Township Sustainable Property.”

Zibi is a member of the Whitpain Township Environmental Advisory Council and wants other homeowners “to turn lawns into native habitats to support pollinators and reduce stormwater runoff.” According to the story, he learned about sustainable gardening at Wissahickon Trails workshops.

He and Kasia purchase most produce from Weavers Way Co-op and local farmers’ markets. They were named [Cooperators of the Month by Weavers Way in 2018](#).

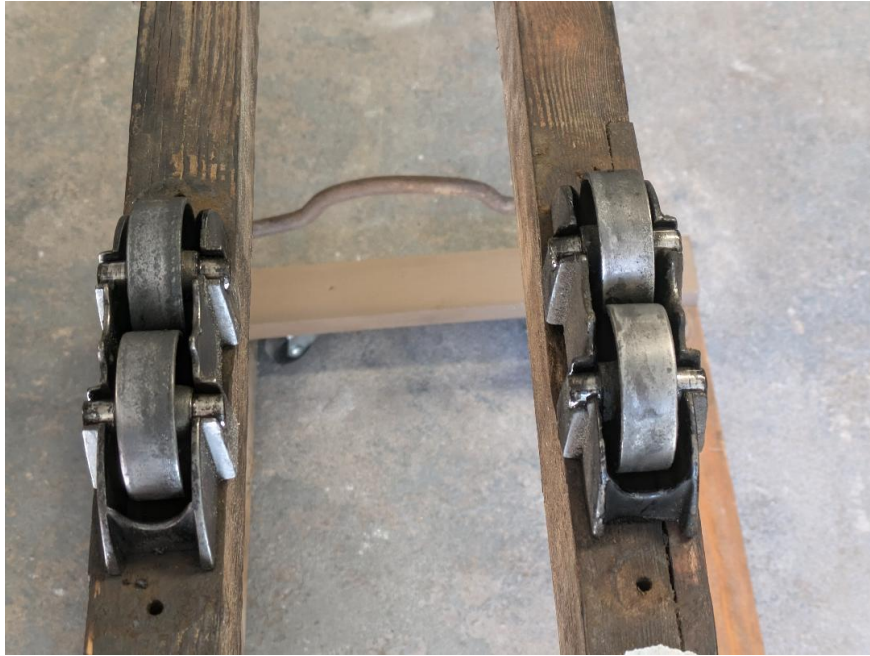
(The article above, by Ryan Genova, appeared online in *AroundAmbler* on June 26, 2024.)

Although a resident of Whitpain, Zibi is a founder of one of the historical society’s most active committees, the Ambler Storytellers. In fact, he helped to organize the Ambler Walking Tours, finding old photos, working on the script, and providing technical know-how for the guest registration. The tours are designed to raise awareness of and to help preserve the rich history of Ambler Borough and its architecture. Congrats to Zibi!



Zibi and Kasia, community-minded members of WVHS, were featured in Sunday's Philadelphia Inquirer.

Gary Fuess Donates Major Gift to WVHS Farm Display: Long-time member Gary is a collector of antique farm implements, and he has donated several to WVHS in the past several years. Last week, he donated an old “whetstone” to our rural exhibit. To whet means to sharpen. A treadle pedal turns the wheel, used for grinding, or sharpening, knives and gardening tools, such as a scythe. Gary estimates this whetstone dates to about 1900-1920, based on the design of the wheels under the carriage. Delivering the heavy whetstone took some planning: He carefully took the whetstone apart from its carriage, labeled the parts, pushed it on a dolly to the WVHS basement, and then reassembled it. Joan Duxbury, always helpful, was on hand to assist.



*The underside of the carriage, showing the gears that turn the wheels.
Below, the whetstone sits atop its carriage.*



The 1895 School and Franklinville School Are Open By Appointment:

Please feel free to contact WVHS to take a private tour of either of our museums. If you have visitors over the summer months who would enjoy a tour, please feel free to contact WVHS. (But note that neither building has air conditioning.): info@WValleyHS.org

WVHS appreciates your contributions: Please make your check payable to "WVHS" and mail to WVHS, P.O. Box 96, Ambler, PA 19002. Or you can donate using *PayPal*-- At <https://www.wvalleyhs.org/>, click "Donate" and follow the prompts.

The WVHS Board of Directors did not meet in June.

The Board is still completing details for the Speakers' Series for Society Year 2024-2025. The Calendar of Events is not yet available.

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.***
