
Wissahickon Valley Historical Society ~ Volume 4, Number 5

The Valley Crier



January 2025

There is **no January meeting**. Enjoy the snow!

Our next meeting is on Monday, February 10, at 7 PM for “Show and Tell”: Bring an object that is meaningful to you and be prepared to briefly tell us about it. It does not have to be old. Where did it come from? Where do you store it? What is it used for? Why is it important to you? Moreover, consider if, in 200 years, since it’s important to you, it may appear in a museum.



*Sons of the American Revolution Color Guard at Wreaths Across America,
Boehm’s Church, December 15, 2024 (Photo from Joan Duxbury)*

Holiday Party Delights WVHS Members: About 35 members shared their favorite dishes and desserts at the 1895 School for the group's December meeting. A wonderful spiral-cut ham was provided by WVHS and prepared by Sally Zeller, along with the pineapple stuffing to accompany it. Dottie MacDermott showed off her craftiness by supplying lovely floral arrangements for the tables. A brief game with five teams competing to test their abilities concluded the evening.



The WVHS 2024 Holiday Party

WVHS Contributes to Mattie N. Dixon Community Cupboard: With an idea instigated by a WVHS member, WVHS guests gave over 50 items to Ambler's Mattie Dixon Food Cupboard as part of their holiday celebration.



*The lively mural outside the Mattie N. Dixon Community Cupboard
(Photo taken December 2024)*

Committee Forming to Plan WVHS 50th Anniversary: 2025 will mark 50 years for WVHS. On Sunday, September 14, starting at 1 PM, WVHS will celebrate with a speaker and luncheon at the William Penn Inn. If you

would like to be on the committee for this or other special activities throughout the year, please let us know: Info@WValleyHS.org

Campaign to Preserve Franklinville School: The WVHS Board of Directors must raise thousands of dollars to paint and make repairs at the Franklinville School. The one-room school, built in 1858, is owned by WVHS and appears on the National Register of Historic Places. The structure was saved and renovated in the 1980s by the Historical Society of Whitpain, which merged with WVHS. Furnished as a 19th-century classroom, the historic structure is one of the gems of Whitpain Township. It has been used for community meetings and as a destination for local school trips. WVHS in recent years has replaced the roof, repaired the front porch, improved drainage, and replaced the electric panel. For the continuing work, WVHS has already raised over \$7,000 but expects to spend \$17,000 to replace some rotting windowsills and to paint and waterproof the outside. No grants are available. As a result, many funds are needed and every member is asked to donate (with no donation too small)! Checks made out to "WVHS" can be mailed to P.O. Box 96, Ambler PA 19002. Or go online to <https://www.wvalleyhs.org/donate/> and follow the prompts.



The back of the 1858 Franklinville School, the 1930s addition, with peeling paint and leaking stucco (Photo from April 2023)

“GivingTuesday” Prompted Much U.S. Generosity: The campaign to do further preservation at the Franklinville School began on December 2, GivingTuesday, a *day of national charity*. The website *NonProfit Pro* reports that nationwide, “GivingTuesday broke records with a 16% surge in donations.... Participants also advocated, gave goods and volunteered their time on GivingTuesday.” The website also reports that volunteer time, nationwide, is valued at over \$30 per hour. WVHS is grateful for its wonderful volunteers!

Dottie MacDermott Decorates at the 1895 School: Once again, talented member Dottie has arranged greens with big red bows to greet guests at the entrance to the 1895 School. Thank you, Dottie, for making the holiday bright!



The 1895 School with new holiday greenery, December 2024.



A Lovely Snow at the 1895 School (Photo taken December 2020)

Ambler Walking Tour Becomes Part of Wissahickon Trails' Staff-

Development Day: The nonprofit's mission is to "inspire and engage diverse communities of people to protect, steward, and enjoy the land and waterways of the Wissahickon Valley." The Wissahickon Trails office contacted WVHS to request the Ambler History Walking Tour as part of their staff-development day. WVHS President Carol Kalos welcomed the group of about 15 and Ambler Storytellers Zibi (Zbigniew Bieniaszewski) and Bernadette Dougherty led them on a cold December afternoon of fun and history. In keeping with their mission, they learned about an underground stream, which flows beneath Butler Avenue properties. (It held a Florida alligator!)



Ambler Storyteller Zibi, showing an old photo of the Ambler Trust Company (1916), now repurposed as Harry's Taproom, behind him. The Hotel Ambler stood to the left of the old bank. See below.

(Photo from Wissahickon Trails Facebook, December 2024)



***The Hotel Ambler, built in 1867, burned down on Christmas Eve, 1946.
(WVHS, Emmy Simon Postcard Collection)***

Winter Reading: Washington's Troops Marched by the 1895 School

Many Times: Recent research has confirmed, using primary sources, that Continental troops marched up and down Skippack Pike at least six times. A website, created at the request of WVHS, was researched by Marc Brier from the Montgomery County Parks, Trails, & Historic Sites. It provides much detailed information about the routes used by Washington's soldiers, good reading for a day when you are snowed in:

[https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/9bade596ea834d8d8f8dd36214a](https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/9bade596ea834d8d8f8dd36214a48c03)

48c03 WVHS has scheduled Michael Jesberger to speak about the Battle of Germantown at the April meeting, and he will continue the narrative about events after the battle when he speaks at the WVHS 50th Anniversary Luncheon on September 14, 2025, at the William Penn Inn.



American Revolution Reenactor Michael Jesberger (Photo from his website)

Work at the Ambler Freight House Reveals Its History: Passenger stations had many windows while freight houses had few windows. The inside of this Freight House shows the frames of several windows. They were covered (See the photo.), so the historic significance of this structure

was lost until last year when WVHS completed a careful reading of documents, showing that the Freight House was Ambler's first passenger station! It is certainly worth preserving. Passenger stations are also narrower and have longer eaves than freight houses, further evidence mentioned in the historical analysis.



Ambler Train Station Freight House in December 2024

Historic Dawesfield Photos Are Online: Washington slept there! Dawesfield, the most famous of Whitpain Township's historic structures, appears on the Library of Congress website in 11 photographs:

<https://www.loc.gov/item/pa3020/>



Dawesfield on Lewis Lane (Photo from Wikipedia)

Good TV is Coming in Fall 2025: PBS will premiere THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION, a six-part film from Ken Burns, Sarah Botstein, and David Schmidt. “The film will present the story of the men and women who waged and witnessed a war that changed the world. Weaving together a wide variety of perspectives from soldiers, civilians, and leaders — famous and forgotten, young and old, native and newcomer, enslaved and free, rich and poor, loyalist and patriot — THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION will tell how, against the odds, thirteen British colonies on the Atlantic Coast united in rebellion, won their independence, and established an American republic that still endures.”

The Museum of the American Revolution (MOAR) Reveals What Happened to the Tea after the Boston Tea Party: Imagine crates of that valuable tea, floating by. Why not retrieve it? MOAR explains, “Participants in what later became known as the ‘Boston Tea Party’... threw about 340 chests of tea (likely around 92,000 pounds) into Boston Harbor on Dec. 16, 1773. There was no recorded environmental impact, though tea continued to surface for some time afterwards. In fact, the morning after the tea was dumped, considerable quantities of it were discovered floating on the surface, and small boats of sailors and citizens were dispatched to beat the tea down into the water with oars and paddles to prevent anyone from saving it for use.”

What is Preservation Pennsylvania? Its “PA At Risk” list, according to an email, serves as a “call to action, bringing statewide attention, promoting

local involvement, and encouraging funding and legislation in support of preservation activities. It partners with local advocates, promotes the calls to action for each property, and provides additional services such as letters of support for Keystone Grants and other funding applications or connecting partners with helpful site-specific expertise.”



***Lynnewood Hall in Cheltenham Township, now being restored,
was placed on the PA Preservation list in 1992***

Historic Information Regarding 8 Lindenwold Terrace in Ambler.

Frank Russo Reminisces about a Local Landmark: In November 2024, Frank Russo, WVHS Past President and Ambler’s history expert, writes the following: The Lindenwold Terrace houses were built in 1896 for executives of the K & M Company. After the buildings were complete, Dr. Richard Mattison decided that he didn’t like executives and so he hand-picked friends to live on the street. Number 8 was reserved for his son, Royal Mattison, and his wife, Florence [as a wedding gift]. They retained ownership until the early 1970s when Florence died. Florence was a

character in Ambler, she could not care for the house in her old age and was content to sit in the parlor, listening to the Victrola playing the song “Barney Google” over and over again. When I was a child, it was a spooky old, haunted house. After Florence Mattison passed, it was purchased by the owners of Philadelphia Print Shop in Chestnut Hill. They restored the house and furnished it with Victorian period antiques. It has had other owners since. (*Realtor.com* reports that it was last sold in 2024.)



Ambler's 8 Lindenwold Terrace, designed by Milton Bean (photo from MLS)

Local History Treasures Wanted: Do you have items tucked away in your attic or basement that reflect life along the Wissahickon in decades gone by? WVHS is on the lookout for artifacts, photos, documents, or any pieces of history related to our area's past. Whether it is a family heirloom, an event t-shirt, an event program, or a vintage photograph of a building or landscape, we would like to hear about them! Help us celebrate our community's rich history. Please contact Info@WValleyHS.org.



Photo from Dreamstime.com

1895 School and Franklinville School Are Open for Tours: For an appointment for a tour of either (or both), please email to Info@WValleyHS.org.

WVHS Volunteer/New-Member Orientation: If you are a new member and/or want to be a volunteer to help with an Open House, please plan to attend a short “training” session at a time convenient for you. RSVP to Info@WValleyHS.org.

Volunteer Day is Thursdays, 12-3 PM: Note the new time. Please come to the 1895 School to spend an hour or two assisting WVHS. We need help with cleaning and accessioning.

There was no Board of Directors’ meeting in December.

Calendar of Events for 2025

- January—no meeting

- February 10 (Monday) 7 PM—"Show and Tell"—Members bring in and tell about a favorite or meaningful object
- March 10 (Monday) 7 PM—Scott Bomboy, Lost Covered Bridges of Montgomery County
- April 14 (Monday) 7 PM—Mike Jesberger, Battle of Germantown
- April 27 (Sunday) 1-3 PM—Open House, 1895 School
- May 12 (Monday)—Annual Meeting and Anthony Selletti, History of Lazaretto Quarantine
- May 18 (Sunday) 1-3 PM—Open House, Franklinville School
- June 9 (Monday) 6:30 PM—Pot-luck Picnic
- Sept 14, 2025 (Sunday) 1-4 PM --William Penn Inn, WVHS 50th Anniversary Celebration (Save the Date) Speaker, Michael Jesberger

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.
