
Wissahickon Valley Historical Society ~ Volume 5, Number 1

The Valley Crier



Sept 2025.....Celebrating our 50th Year

Plan to attend---Three Events in September:

- **Sunday, Sept 14, 1 PM—WVHS 50th Anniversary Celebration** at Wm Penn Inn. TODAY is the deadline to register! Tickets are \$65. Please register online, promptly www.WValleyHS.org/donate/
- **Thursday, Sept 25, 4-10 PM—"Dine and Donate"** at Tannery Run Brew Works, Ambler
- **Sunday, Sept 28, 1-3 PM—1895 School, Open House**, with exhibit telling about 50 years of WVHS history and highlighting repairs to save the 1895 School and the Franklinville School. **Birthday cake!**
- . . . Also, the WVHS dues are due. Our Society Year 2025-2026 begins on Sept 1. Please see the details for payment at <https://www.wvalleyhs.org/join-us-2/>

Ambler Walking Tours Resume: The Storytellers, a WVHS committee, will offer tours on six dates during the fall season. These tours along Butler Avenue are on Saturdays, starting at 3 PM and last about an hour. Tour guides point out many details about the architecture and history that you have never noticed. Unusual tales, guaranteed! Tickets are \$15 and online reservations are required. All proceeds help to rebuild the Ambler Freight House, and guests receive a coupon from Tannery Run Brew Works. Dates are Sept 20; Oct 4; Oct 18; Nov 1; Nov 22; and Dec 6. Registration is here: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/ambler-downtown-walking-tour-fall-2025-tickets-1626330872419?aff=oddtcreator>

Want to lead an Ambler Walking Tour? The Ambler Storytellers, a committee of WVHS, offers tours of Butler Avenue on Saturday afternoons during the fall and spring seasons. If you like history, this is for you! Training is provided and tour guides choose their tour dates. You can begin as an assistant. The tours offer a great way to have fun and to help the community save its historic landmarks. For details, please email Info@WValleyHS.org.

State Reps Honor WVHS 50th: Our area's two Pennsylvania representatives, Liz Handbidge (District 61) and Melissa Cerrato (District 151), issued a Pennsylvania House Proclamation to recognize the WVHS 50th Anniversary. It states, in part, WVHS "has preserved an 1889 passenger depot [and] helped with several other preservation projects. The House of Representatives salutes WVHS upon its richly deserved

recognition; offers best wishes for continued growth and success in the years to come.” In July, the pair met with President Carol Kalos and Fawn (Ostriak) Carey, both members of the 50th celebration’s committee, for a brief tour of the 1895’s museum and for photographs. Both state representatives, describing themselves as “working mothers,” brought their children along for the visit. “It is summer,” explained Representative Cerrato.



Melissa Cerrato, Ambler’s state representative, admires a stained-glass window, obtained from Dr. Mattison’s mansion, Lindenwold, and depicting his wife.



***Fawn Carey, Melissa Cerrato, Carol Kalos, and Liz Hanbidge Display
the Proclamation Honoring the WVHS 50th Anniversary***

Constitution Week is Sept 17-23: The US Constitution was signed on Sept 17, 1787. The date recognizes those who have become citizens through naturalization. It is meant to remind all citizens to reflect on the Constitution's principles and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.



A WVHS Legacy Project to Mark *America250*: In about nine months, the United States will celebrate its 250th year. Around the country, civil groups and historical societies like ours will mark the occasion by contributing to their communities or sponsoring events. WVHS has investigated several ideas, concluding that it will display its 1896 American flag at the 1895 School in the second-floor classroom--with a dedication to take place in 2026. The estimate to frame the treasured item is \$1800, and funds are being sought. For more information, please email to Info@WValleyHS.org.



1896 US Flag

Exterior Renovations Continue at One-Room School: Verco Painting has been busy removing rotting wood and preparing to paint the outside of the Franklinville School. WVHS member Joan Duxbury is overseeing the communications about the project. Recently, to water blast, WVHS “borrowed” a neighbor’s garden hose because there is no running water at

the site. Remnants of a well and an outhouse are capped and surrounded by fencing.



August 6, 2025, at the Franklinville School. See the deer?



***The back of the Franklinville School, prepared for painting, August 13, 2025
(Photo from Joan Duxbury)***



***The side of the Franklinville School after loose stucco was removed,
August 18, 2025 (Photo from Barry Johnson)***



***The front of the Franklinville School, water blasted in August 2025
(Photo from Barry Johnson)***

Wissahickon Valley Historical Society Restoring Franklinville School

The 1858 Franklinville School is a one-room school located at 1701 Morris Road in Blue Bell. It was once part of historic Normandy Farms. Today it is owned by the nonprofit Wissahickon Valley Historical Society, who has added a roof, improved the electrical system, added a drainage system in the crawl space and Verco Painting has recently finished restoring the shutters and has started on the exterior restoration.



Donations are needed to continue this essential work. Funds are needed for interior restoration and painting, adding HVAC and rebuilding the rear patio.

To learn more about the Franklinville School, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and to donate using a credit card, PayPal or Venmo, please access <https://www.wvalleyhs.org/donate/> and follow the prompts. In the "use this donation for" section, please select "Franklinville School". You may donate by check payable to "WVHS", referencing "Franklinville School", and mail to WVHS, P.O.Box 96, Ambler, PA 19002. Any questions and to schedule a tour, please call 215-646-6541. Thank you.

WVHS is a certified 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

Franklinville School needs funds! Joan Duxbury created this poster for Facebook, and it appeared in August for the first time. Thanks, Joan!

Online Video on Conserving Old Books: Penn State offers this lecture describing how its library works on book conservation. Hear about mold, torn pages, and even arsenic book covers.

<https://psu.mediaspace.kaltura.com/media/Preserving+Pages>

[%3A+The+Art+and+Science+of+Book+Conservation/1_9o1bc318](https://psu.mediaspace.kaltura.com/media/Preserving+Pages/%3A+The+Art+and+Science+of+Book+Conservation/1_9o1bc318)

Library Hosted History Speaker: Liz Baurer from the DAR Museum in Washington, D.C. spoke in August at the Ambler Library on the history of American sewing. She pointed out that men sewed sails and leather while women made clothing, furnished their homes, showcased their creativity, and in some cases supported themselves financially. Before ready-to-wear, when fabric was expensive, dressmakers planned a dress to be redesigned to fit the changing styles.

Whitpain Township Mile Marker Discovered Years Later in Worcester:

A clipping from the *Ambler Gazette* (from the late 1970s, but with no date) found in the Bob Whittock Collection, reports that the “19 M To P” (19 miles to Philadelphia) Milestone had been missing but was then found. It turns out that during construction in 1965 near St. John Lutheran Church, Robert Dibble, of Dibble’s Country Store in Cedars, Worcester Township, saw the relic in a roadway trash heap and brought it home. The stone weighs several hundred pounds! So the task involved “a chain hoist, a helper and his pick-up truck.” Later, the Dibbles were happy to return the marker to

the church. A coincidence: The Mile Marker in the clipping is the same Mile Marker featured in the April 2025 *Valley Crier*, pictured below.



Colonial-era Mile Marker, located at St. John Lutheran Church, at 1802 Skippack Pike: “19 Miles to Philadelphia” (Photo from April 2025)

“Justice Bell” Begins Residency at Montco: A replica of the 1915 Justice Bell, appearing like the Liberty Bell and used to fight for women’s voting rights, will be on display at Montgomery County Community College, starting this month. Its goal is to inspire voter registration. The college has scheduled three years of events, with the first event at the Blue Bell campus for its students and employees. However, on June 24, 2027, the

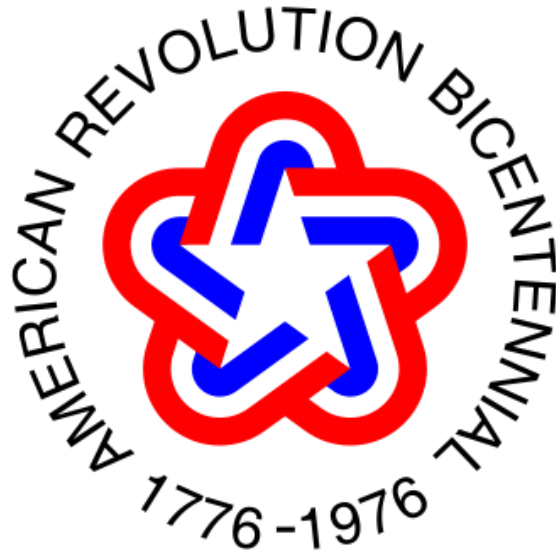
community will be invited to mark the anniversary of Pennsylvania ratifying the 19th Amendment. Montco will also become the archive location for the history of the bell.



America 250 Celebrates with “Bells Across America”: Ceremonies will be held across Pennsylvania to inspire citizens to take pride in their history. Art installations showcase artists who are placing a bell representation in each county. Montgomery County’s “Liberty” bell was unveiled in August at the Trappe Speaker’s House, the destination for the WVHS spring outing.



Do you have 1976 US Bicentennial souvenirs? Please consider if you have items around your house from the US 200th celebration. WVHS is putting together a display for the spring of 2026, so the society may want to borrow some of your keepsakes.



American Revolution Question: How many ships can you imagine in New York's Harbor? In June of 1776, the British landed in New York City, ready to invade the Colonies. They carried "32,000 troops," made famous in a lyric from "Hamilton: An American Musical." At first 150 ships arrived, but by August 22, there were 400 vessels! British forces defeated the Continental Army in the New York campaign that followed.



Follow-up to August *CRIER*--Edwin Booth Owned a Philadelphia Theatre: Last month's *Crier* reported that Edwin Booth, brother of John Wilkes Booth, saved the life of Robert Lincoln, the President's son. According to the Walnut Street Theatre's website, Edwin Booth was a "great classical actor" and once owned that theater!

History Speaker announced for Sept at Blue Bell Library: Michael Martorelli will speak on "The Development of the Electric Grid" at the Wissahickon Valley Public Library on Thursday, September 11, at 6 PM. Martorelli was the WVHS speaker in November 2024 on "The Evolution of the Coast Artillery from the American Revolution until WW II."

The Board of Directors did not meet in August.

Calendar of Events for Society Year 2025-2026

- Sept 14 (Sun), WVHS 50th Anniversary Celebration
- Sept 25 (Thurs), "Dine & Donate," Tannery Run Brew Works, Ambler, 4-10 PM
- Sept 28 (Sun), 1-3 PM, 1895 School Open House, featuring WVHS 50th with displays and birthday cake
- Oct 13 (Mon) 7 PM, Chris Reardon, Battle of the Clouds
- Oct 19 (Sun) 1-3 PM, Franklinville School Open House
- Nov 10 (Mon) 7 PM, Douglas Miller, Director, Pennsbury Manor
- Dec 8 (Mon) 6:30 PM, Holiday Party

- Jan—No meeting
- Feb 9 (Mon) 7PM, Show and Tell
- Mar 9 (Mon) 7 PM Tom Keels, Phila's Golden Age of Retail
- Apr 13 (Mon) 7 PM Michael Martorelli, Colonial Newspapers
- May 11 (Mon) 7 PM Dr. Philip Mead, Chief Historian and Curator, Museum of the American Revolution (Philadelphia)
- June 8 (Mon) 6:30 PM, Pot-Luck Picnic & Corn Auction

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.

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