
Wissahickon Valley Historical Society ~ Volume 5, Number 2

The Valley Crier



Oct 2025.....Celebrating our 50th Year

Plan to attend---Two Events in October

- **Speaker** on Monday, October 13, at 7 PM. Chris Reardon on the American Revolution's "Battle of the Clouds." At the WVHS 50th Luncheon, the speaker, Michael Jesberger, described this battle as the one that was rained out! It is an amazing part of local and national history.
- **Open House** at Franklinville School on Sunday, October 19, 1-3 PM. Come see the lovely, newly-painted exterior, and more! 1701 Morris Road. Enter through the white post-and-rail fence and park to the right.
- . . . Also, **WVHS dues are due**. Our Society Year 2025-2026 began on Sept 1. Please see the details for payment at <https://www.wvalleyhs.org/join-us-2/>

WVHS Luncheon Marks 50th Anniversary: 67 Guests attended the festivities at the William Penn Inn when WVHS celebrated its fifty-year

anniversary. President Carol Kalos welcomed guests and invited all WVHS former volunteers and officers to stand for a round of applause for their service to WVHS and the community. Past President (and the first president) Frank Russo highlighted the history of the WVHS first 25 years. In those days, fund-raising was accomplished with cocktail parties at historic homes. Then past president Russ Bellavance related our second 25 years, noting that fund-raising was accomplished through Market Days. To cap off the day, historian Michael Jesberger presented a talk about Patriot troop movements up and down Skippack Pike from the weeks prior to the Battle of Germantown until the men entered Valley Forge. He noted that Brigadier General Francis Nash was wounded at the battle and carried in a wagon to what is now Reed's Country Store, then Porter's Tavern. He died of his wounds, and Nashville, Tennessee, is named after him.



Flower arrangements, waiting for the 50th celebration



Judy Baigis, Bernadette Dougherty, and Joe Langella at the registration table



The first president of WVHS, Frank Russo



Dottie MacDermott with her raffle tickets



Bob Bradley looks for a winning raffle ticket

Wissahickon Valley Historical Society

Wishes to thank the following for their contributions
to the *50th Anniversary Luncheon*

For Raffle or Silent Auction Items:

Act II Playhouse
American Helicopter Museum
Cantina Feliz
Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site
From the Boot
Grand Opera House, Wilmington
Harry's Taproom
Longwood Gardens
McCaffrey's Food Markets
Panache Woodfire Grill
People's Light Theater
Philadelphia Museum of Art
Phil's Tavern
Pudges Steaks & Hoagies
Reading Fightin Phils
Smoke & Mirrors Magic Theater
Urban Air Adventure & Trampoline Park
Wharton Esherick Museum
Winterthur
Wilma Theater

For purchasing ads:

Ambler Savings Bank
Chow Law Firm
The Jane Douglas Team
Tom and Marie Goldkamp
Keller Williams Real Estate, Lei Berry, Realtor
Minuteman Press
Rotary Club of Blue Bell
Frank Russo
Spring House Travel
Verco Painting

For creating community:

Borough of Ambler
Lower Gwynedd Township
Whitpain Township

For personal donations:

Mark Ashton
Russ and Jeannie Bellavance
Tom and Marie Goldkamp
Kate Harper
Frank Russo

For helpful members:

Judy Baigis
Fawn Carey
Bernadette Dougherty
Barry Johnson
Chris Raines

50th Anniversary Luncheon, WVHS Items Displayed on the Tables:

- Early 20th-Century Milk Bottle
Marples Dairy, Spring House, PA
- Tin Candle Mold
Late 18th or early 19th Century
Used to mold candles for lighting homes
- Salt Glazed Handled Jug
Mid to late 19th Century
Used to store liquids in the early days
- “Tufglas” Double-Handled Mixing Bowl
Circa 1920-1930
Made by the J.E. Marsden Glassworks, Ambler, PA
- Stereo Viewer
Circa 1870-1890
Used to view photos in 3-D
- Forest Hill Farm Milk Bottle
Circa early 20th Century
From a dairy in Penllyn, PA
- Brass Inkstand
Circa 1880-1900
Used for writing with a quill pen
- Armatel Plate from Three Tuns Tavern
Circa early 20th Century
Three Tuns Tavern was located on Butler Pike, Ambler, from 1740 -1948

- Myers Dairy Milk Bottle
Circa early 20th Century
Myers Dairy was in Ambler, PA
- Sally Wistar's Journal Cover
Circa 1907
Journal was written in Penllyn, PA, during the Revolutionary War
- Staffordshire Plate
Circa 1825-1840
Owned by Henry Slutter, who operated a Coachworks in Ambler, PA

(Items chosen by Frank Russo, Sept 2025)

“Dine & Donate” Raises Funds: This WVHS event at Tannery Run Brew Works attracted about twenty members although the proceeds will be based on all patrons for the evening. The evening brought many friendly faces, good food, and outstanding brew.

Open House Reveals Details of the 1895 Restoration: A giant poster and many photographs were the feature of Sunday's Open House event. They told the story of how the 1895 has gradually been restored over the decades. The structure has been improved with a new roof, new stucco, gallons of paint, and lots of “elbow grease.” Appearing in the National Register of Historic Places, it is all original. Thankfully, however, since 1895, window blinds and indoor plumbing have been added.



Cake to celebrate!



Secretary Marie Goldkamp and Vice President Joseph Langella



1970s Long, Crocheted Vest to Reflect the WVHS's Start in 1975



***Centre Square Fire Company's 1919 REO Speed Wagon,
recently honored as the oldest in PA, at the 1895 Open House,***

Ambler Walking Tours Resume: The Storytellers, a WVHS committee, will offer tours on several dates during the fall season. For groups of 12, these tours along Butler Avenue are held on Saturdays, starting at 3 PM and ending at about 4:30. Tour guides point out many details about the architecture and history--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 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 amblerstorytellers@gmail.com

Volunteer Day is Thursday: Thursdays have been set for the WVHS weekly "Volunteer Day" at the 1895 School. There are a variety of chores, including dusting, refolding fabrics, and cataloguing/accessioning new donations to the museum. For questions, email Info@WValleyHS.org



WVHS at Whitpain's Fest: Last Saturday, Joe Langella and Barry Johnson represented WVHS at Whitpain Township's Community Festival. They report much interest in local history, especially questions about the future of the historic Reed's Country Store, now for sale. It may become a car wash. It was once the Centre Square Hotel, site of first, a significant American Revolution incident, and later, an important national Republican meeting. Its 1777 owner was a Tory who refused to serve Rebels! So as the Continental Army marched by, Washington ordered that his men could not enter.

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 project. Steve Vereb, the painter, had to replace some rotten windowsills. He found “old or true dimension lumber” at a local sawmill, which had originally been part of a 225-year-old barn in Wellsboro, Tioga County, PA! WVHS is lucky that sawmills save this old wood because it is heavier and denser than “new” wood. Now the repair is older than the school itself!



**A “new” piece of “old” wood for the Franklinville School,
delivered by Verco Painting**



This new windowsill with “old” wood will hold the weight of the shutters



Joan Duxbury photo from September 1



Starting the first round of patching the stucco (Sept 1)



Joan Duxbury's photo from Sept 14 with windows glazed and the windowsills repaired and primed



***Franklinville School, taken in 1885-1890, by S.R. Fisher, Photographer,
Norristown, PA***

New Photo of Franklinville School with No Porch: On September 2, 2025, Martha Parker sent an email to WVHS, stating, "I have been going through my family's things and have located a photograph of the students at Franklinville School. I would guess that this photo was taken somewhere around 1885-1890. Amanda Naylor is in the top row, third from left. She is my great grand aunt and was born in 1875. I will be attaching a photo. I have scanned it and added it to my ancestry information so I am willing to donate it if you would all want it."



The photographer's ad: Reverse side of a stereograph, "S.R. Fisher..."



Cleaning the Franklinville School fence

Franklinville Fence Gets Its First Cleaning: Joan Duxbury and Sally Zeller cleaned the inside of the white post-and-rail fence in front of the Franklinville School. There is no running water at the school, so the fence has never been cleaned! WVHS borrowed the garden hose from a neighbor to do the job. Note the clean section on the left, compared to the dark section on the right. What a job! This photo was taken on September 16, 2025.

Windemere Residents Invited to Franklinville School's Open House: A special invitation has gone out to the HOA at Windemere, inviting residents to the Franklinville School on October 19. One family sure to be there is Paul and Phoebe Lim and their children. Their property sits behind the school, and they offered their garden hose for use by Verco Painting as Steve did water blasting, prior to stucco repair and painting. Thank you to the Lim family!

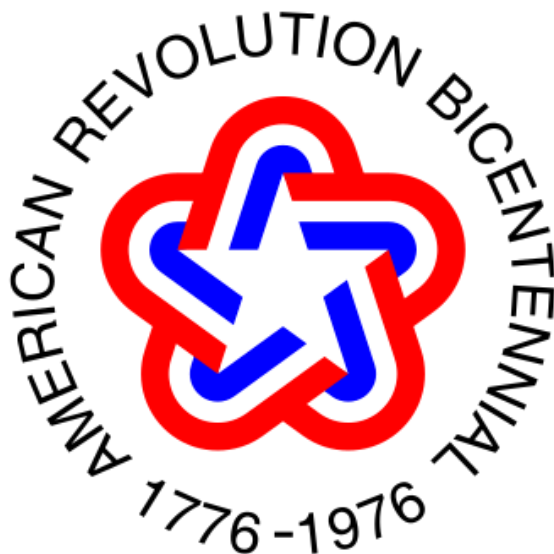
A WVHS Legacy Project to Mark *America250*: In about nine months, the United States will celebrate its 250th year. Around the country, civil groups and historical societies like ours will mark the occasion by contributing to their communities or sponsoring events. WVHS has investigated several ideas, concluding that it will display its 1896 American flag (for the first time) at the 1895 School in its second-floor classroom--with a dedication to take place in 2026. The 1896 flag (in use until 1908) would have flown at the school, which was dedicated in November of 1895. The 1896 flag with 45 stars marked the admission of the state of Utah. The estimate to frame the treasured item is \$1800, and funds are being sought. For more information or to donate, please email to Info@WValleyHS.org.



1896 US Flag with 45 Stars

Montgomery County Appoints *America250* Committee: The County Commissioners have chosen over two dozen citizens to bring together government and tourism for programs and events, according to the *Ambler Gazette*. The committee will invite visitors to our neighborhoods as our country celebrates its 250 years. Valley Forge National Historical Park is expected to play a role, and a public reading of the Declaration of Independence is already planned for Blue Bell.

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.



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.

New Use for Old Ambler Building: “Ridge Hall” at 15 S. Ridge Ave held its Grand Opening last month as a food hall, brewery, and more, becoming a fine example of “adaptive reuse.” In the past, the site was used by a dairy, by the food industry, and by a contracting firm.

Membership List Coming in January: It's not the directory that WVHS used to publish, but it will help you get in touch with your history friends. The board plans to publish a membership list—with an option for you to “opt out” your name, address, phone, and/or email. Although dues were due in September, we are accommodating the late-comers and plan to print in January.

The 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 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.

From the Board of Directors’ September Meeting:

- A group of framed photos has been donated, and the owner said WVHS can use them for fundraising. Some will be auctioned; some will be accessioned.
- The colonial milestone at the Blue Bell Elementary School should be repainted.
- The Whitpain fire marshal is investigating a false fire alarm at the 1895 School.

Calendar of Events for Society Year 2025-2026

- 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
- April 19 (Sun) 1-3 PM 1895 Open House

- May 11 (Mon) 7 PM Dr. Philip Mead, Chief Historian and Curator, Museum of the American Revolution (Philadelphia)
- May 17 (Sun) 1-3 PM Franklinville School Open House
- 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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