
Wissahickon Valley Historical Society ~ Volume 5, Number 3

The Valley Crier



Nov 2025.....Celebrating our 50th Year

Speaker on Monday, November 10 at 7 PM: Douglas Miller, a museum expert and the director at Pennsbury Manor, former Bucks County home of William Penn.

William Penn founded his own colony, based on a debt owed to his father. Pennsylvania would become the fastest growing of all the colonies within twenty years of its being Chartered by King Charles II in the early 1680s. He was progressive in his thinking and broad in his reach. Learn about Penn and his vision for a better life and better world.

Doug Miller states that he is a proud employee of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission. He has served as the director at Brandywine Battlefield, Hope Lodge, Graeme Park, Washington's Crossing, and Curtin Village, and he is currently the chairman of "Visit Bucks County." With 40 years of museum experience, he also serves the broader museum community as a Peer Reviewer for the accreditation process of the American Alliance of Museums, a group including zoos and museums of art, history, and science.



Pennsbury Manor, built 1683

PA Historical & Museum Commission

WVHS Dues Are Due. Society Year 2025-2026 began on September 1.

So far, about half of our members are up to date. Please see the details for payment at <https://www.wvalleyhs.org/join-us-2/>

Member Bob Bradley, October's Speaker: Usually we see Bob in the audience, but last month he presented on Hope Lodge (where he was PA's Volunteer of the Year) and its relationship to the Battle of Whitemarsh. First, he described how Hope Lodge's architecture shows Georgian "high style" with symmetry, a hip roof, and even a "false niche" on second floor over the façade's center door. Next, he told about the various owners of the lovely

house. Then, using excellent maps, he summarized the local American Revolution battles that became important worldwide: Battle of Brandywine; Battle of the Clouds; The Paoli Massacre; Battle of Germantown; the retreat to Schwenksville; Washington's stay at Dawesfield, where plans were drawn for the Battle of Whitemarsh; and finally Valley Forge. He explained that the British army, including Hessians, fought with 10-12,000 men, and maybe more. He emphasized how our area became a location for foraging parties, small groups of a thousand soldiers who were looking for food, sometimes leading to skirmishes.

Hope Lodge will be open on Saturday, November 1, 10 am – 4 pm, for its Whitmarsh Encampment Reenactment:

<https://www.historichopelodge.org/encampment>



Hope Lodge, built 1743-1748

PA Historical & Museum Commission and Friends of Hope Lodge

WVHS Presents October Display: At the Ambler Branch of the WVPL, the display, entitled “Haunted History,” showed photos and descriptions of locations in and around Ambler, visited by spirits: Broad Axe Tavern (look for Rachel, a former tavern owner’s daughter, peeking out a second-floor window), Camp Woods (a burial site for American Revolution soldiers), the former Ambler Gazette building (where a stylish Edwardian woman roams), Mary Ambler’s House (where burn victims were treated for months after the Great Train Wreck), and Gypsy Blu, the former Wyndham Hotel (where a 19th-century woman in white wanders the upper floors while an early 20th-century gentleman sits at the bar)!



October's WVHS Exhibit at Ambler Library: “Haunted History”

“Dine & Donate” Raises Funds: The WVHS evening at Ambler’s Tannery Run Brew Works, reported in last month’s *Valley Crier*, raised \$200, so more events will be planned.

Ambler Walking Tours: The Storytellers, a WVHS committee, is offering its fall tours. 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. The remaining dates are **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

Open House Event as Exterior Renovations Are Completed at One-Room School: Verco Painting is close to completing the work at the Franklinville School, which WVHS member Joan Duxbury is overseeing. Steve Vereb, the painter, has two more shutters to hang, and he is working on a second-floor vent. (See photo.) Joan Duxbury and Sally Zeller were quite successful in preparing for the school's wonderful October 19th Open House. They cleaned the interior, set up displays, washed curtains, weeded the flower beds, hung balloons, and hosted refreshments. Residents of Windemere, the housing development adjacent to the property, received a special invitation to the event, and about seven families walked over to look inside. Many thanks to Sally and Joan!



***Restored flower bed outside the Franklinville School gate on Oct 6, 2025
(Photo from Joan Duxbury)***



Joan Duxbury's photo from Oct 7, 2025, showing new white paint



Oct 18, 2025, with newly-painted shutters (Photo from Joan Duxbury)



Open House, Oct 19, 2025 (Photo from Joan Duxbury)



The view from Morris Road on Oct 19, 2025 (Joan Duxbury)



Work continues on the vent over the back door, Oct 27, 2025

Artifact Associated with Franklinville School: One reason the school is listed in the National Register of Historic Places is that, beyond being an old school, it was a community center, visited by thousands of county residents as they celebrated their membership in the Fifty-Year Club, sponsored by a Norristown newspaper. Sally Zeller writes, “Last month I visited the Montgomery County Historical Society to do research in the newspapers on the Fifty-Year Club. It was an education, a fun day looking through the microfilms, and as always, they were so helpful. That help continued last Thursday when I received an email from Tia, the Administrative & Visitor Service Manager. She had a visitor that morning wanting to donate a [Fifty-Year Club] badge. She declined the badge as they already had one but said she would contact another visitor [me] who may have an interest. She was correct!”

“This past Sunday morning, Joan and I met Mike Comfort at the Franklinville School. We gave him a brief tour, and he plans to come to the Open House [held on October 19]. He gave us the badge in its original box, along with an award medallion, reading ‘Philadelphia Riders and Drivers Association 1922.’ The other side of the medallion reads ‘Wissahickon Horse Show: More Hoof Beats.’ There is an area for an inscription,

AWARDED TO, but it is blank. Unfortunately, this is not from Mike's family. It was given to him by his brother who got it from a friend."



A Fifty-Year Club Ribbon, on display at the 1895 School

A Compliment: President Carol Kalos invited a township official to tour the displays at the 1895 School. He replied sheepishly, "I did some work here; then that afternoon, my colleague and I 'accidentally' enjoyed over an hour looking around. What a great day!"

Boehm's Church Is Changing: Boehm's Church is working towards 501(c)(3) status (non-profit, tax-exempt), and it has recently changed its name to "Boehm's Historic Park." A temporary hospital for Patriot troops after the Battle of Germantown, the building will continue as part of the adjacent historic cemetery.

Montgomery County Previews “A Vision for 2050,” Including Historic

Preservation: The public was invited to the Ambler Theater in September for a meeting hosted by the Planning Commission, where it introduced its *Montco 2050*. About 75 people attended. The final draft will supply data and goals for local municipalities as they do planning and make grant applications. *Montco 2050* will cover health, population, transportation, housing, environmental systems, land use, and others. (Of importance is balancing growth and preservation.) Each topic revealed three subtopics: what the public says, what the county knows already, and the county’s vision for 2050. Concerning historic preservation, it includes the following:

What the county heard: Reuse historic buildings instead of demolishing them.

What the county knows: The county has many historic buildings, structures, and sites—some of which pre-date the country’s founding—that contribute to its character and foster adaptive reuse projects and cultural/educational programs.

The county’s vision: In 2050, the county will recognize and celebrate its heritage through the preservation of its historically significant sites, art, landmarks, architecture, and places.

Under “Historic Preservation,” the county plan states, “Preserving and adaptively reusing historic resources demonstrates a respect for the unique history and character of our communities and balances new development. The identification, preservation, and enhancement of historic resources largely happen at the municipal level [emphasis added]. This might be achieved by integrating historic preservation programs and policies into

comprehensive and economic development planning, reviewing proposed changes to historic structures, and using regulatory tools for the protection of historic resources.” It adds, “Thirty-three of the county’s 62 municipalities have ordinances related to historic preservation.” Details are here:

<https://engage.montgomerycountypa.gov/en/folders/montco-2050> .

The National Trust for Historic Preservation says:

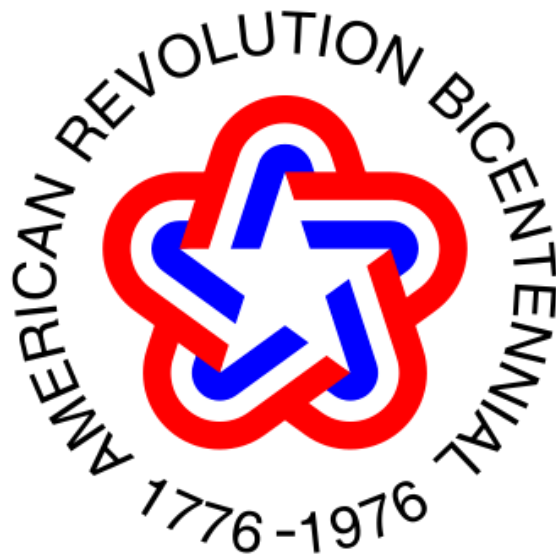
What would happen if our members stopped advocating for historic places?

- **Destruction of historic sites** due to gentrification and environmental threats
- **Erasure of stories** that are critical to telling the full American experience
- **Environmental damage** from razing historic buildings, rather than reusing them
- **Loss of community identity** as neighborhoods lose the places that make them unique

AI Revolution Affects Workers: Several inventions have changed the way people work: the steam and then gasoline engine, electricity, the internet, and now AI. In each case, workers have lost their jobs and have had to retrain for different positions. In some cases, the population has shifted; for instance, farm workers moved to cities for manufacturing jobs. Now experts are reminding us of the influence of AI. Some economists are predicting more productivity, but experts say that incomes are shifting from the middle class to the upper class.

A Repeated Request: 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.

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.

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 times (they sometimes vary) and details, email 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' October Meeting:

- A WVHS member will be asked to compile the new WVHS Membership List
- Insignia Signs will offer advice about replacing the 1895 School's sign during the School Road construction
- The colonial Milestone at Blue Bell Elementary should be repainted

Calendar of Events for Society Year 2025-2026

- 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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