
Wissahickon Valley Historical Society ~ Volume 5, Number 5

The Valley Crier



Jan 2026.....Celebrating our 50th Year!

**It's January! The United States begins 2026, ready to celebrate
its 250th anniversary!**

- **There is NO meeting in January.**
- **Calendar Change: Please note that the May 2026 meeting has
been changed to Monday, May 4, at 7 PM.**
- **Please come! On Monday, February 9, at 7 PM is Show N Tell:
Enjoy a fun evening. Refreshments will be served.**

In February, come one and all for "Show N Tell," one of the year's favorite programs. Each guest brings an important item from home to SHOW the group as they briefly TELL about the item. Although we are a history society, these need not be history-related items. And anything important to you today will be of historical importance to someone in the future! Please enjoy a fun, relaxing evening together.

Holiday Party Brings Friends Together: On a bitter cold evening, our members celebrated the season with a delicious pot-luck dinner. WVHS supplied the ham, prepared by Sally Zeller. The evening ended with a round of local “History Bingo,” won by Bob Bradley.



Are You Interested in Saving the 1760's Roadside Milestones? WVHS is collecting data to have the roadside markers, used to designate the postal rates to colonial Philadelphia, receive appropriate recognition. To start the project, **someone needs to visit the nine in our area and record their location (latitude and longitude).** Here is a photo of one of the Milemarkers in 2022, preserved by the Centre Square Fire Company, indicating "18 Miles to Philadelphia." If you would like to lead this project, or simply help, please let us know: Info@WValleyHS.org



Veterans Honored: In December, two chapters for the local Daughters of the American Revolution sponsored programs at Boehm's Church and the Church of the Messiah. For the holiday season, wreaths were placed at the gravesites of American Revolution soldiers.



Church of the Messiah, "Wreaths Across America," December 2025

(Gwynedd Chapter, DAR)

Helpers Wanted: WVHS needs help! Since the pandemic, we have been losing volunteers, and most of the activities are completed by the board members. They need help! As part of the weekly "Volunteer Day," Thursday work sessions (**or any time!**), the board is looking for those who can assist to

- Write articles for the *Valley Crier* and *The Quill*
- Create displays for the exhibits at the three municipal buildings
- Create occasional displays for the two Wissahickon Valley Public Libraries
- Attend and report on municipal planning-committee discussions
- Accession new items and documents
- Re-fold the fabrics in the collection
- Set-up and take-down for events
- Present programming for children
- Dust, vacuum, wash floors, wipe stairs and woodwork, clean bathroom, wash outdoor benches, sweep the porch
- Find and communicate with speakers
- Send press releases

Nametags a New Habit: Members have been asking to return to wearing nametags at the meetings. Since the September meeting, guests and members old and new have been wearing nametags as we continue to welcome each other to the 1895 School.

Still More Repairs at Franklinville School: Repairs at the school have far exceeded the original estimates. Franklinville School was built in 1858 and used as a public school until 1916. The back portion of the school was added around 1930 to be a “Projector Room.” The 1930s owners of the school, the wealthy Strassburgers, showed movies at the Franklinville School on Saturday nights for the local farmers, so the room was built for the projectionist. A semi-circular vent appears above its back door. Was this an expensive creation in those days? Verso Painting discovered that the wood creating the vent was rotting, so it had to be replaced. Due to the elaborate shape, the wood must be bent, making this a long, involved, and expensive project! In addition, the floor in that projector room is “spongy,” so it will require a repair.



*A Rare Scene, the Newly-Painted Franklinville School at Night
(Photo by Joan Duxbury, November 2025)*

Dottie Does it Again: For the new holiday season, Dottie MacDermott has once again decorated the outside of the 1895 School. We appreciate her dedication! She has been doing these floral arrangements for years! She also did the centerpieces for the holiday party. And each display is lovely!



Ambler Walking Tours: Will begin in the springtime and warmer weather. During the calendar year 2025, 55 guests took the tour, learning more about Ambler's rich history and raising \$672 to restore the Ambler Train Station's Freight House, created from the station's first passenger depot.

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

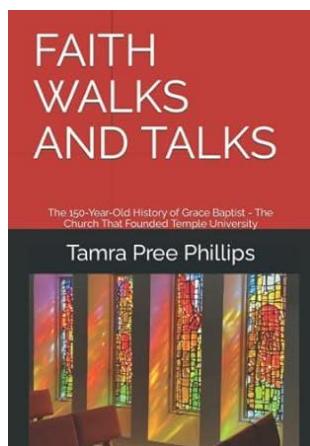
Work Continues at Ambler Train Station's Culvert: The Ambler Freight House was the station's first passenger depot and is part of a National Historic District. SEPTA insisted it be torn down, so that the culvert under it could be stabilized. With the help of private donations, the Freight House was gently removed, in pieces, in the spring of 2025, and today it is stored and waiting for a new location. Workers at the site report that a new liner for the culvert has been ordered. The photo below shows the opening to the culvert and the new concrete along the Tannery Run. The temporary orange fencing marks approximately where the Freight House used to stand. Note the Deck's Hardware sign in the background. The building to its right is the lovely stone stable, built for the Hotel Ambler (1867), which stood near the train station.



The Culvert at the Ambler Train Station, December 28, 2025

Local Author Donates to WVHS Library: Tamra Pree Phillips, our speaker at the meeting in February 2022, has recently sent a copy of her book for WVHS use. Entitled *Faith Walks and Talks: The 150-Year-Old History of Grace Baptist—The Church That Founded Temple University* (2022), the book's 528 pages include 35 chapters with chapters about church history alternating with interviews of the congregants, who reveal their memories of the church's history from their own baptism, to singing in the choir, to summer camp adventures. A scripture verse introduces each chapter.

Grace Baptist's congregation started over 150 years ago. It built the Baptist Temple with seating for over 3000, now renovated by Temple University and used as its Performing Arts Center. By the time the congregation left to move to the suburbs, the temple's roof leaked and there was interior damage. One incident Phillips describes pertains to the site's historic preservation: The university's trustees voted to tear down that original Baptist Temple, so the city was in shock. One commentator said, "It was if the president of Penn had decided to go out and shoot a Quaker!" Fortunately, public opinion was able to save the structure.



University Expert Visits WVHS Women's Clothing: In December, with President Carol Kalos, Denise Wagner, who is the Rutgers' Theater's Costume Director, spent several hours examining our fashions. With each box she opened, she oohed and aahed. Her purpose was to analyze the items and find inspiration for her future costume designs. She was especially thrilled with the expertly-sewn brown dress that appears on the second-floor mannequin, and she plans to return in the spring to "document" the garment and prepare a pattern from it, which she will then share with WVHS.

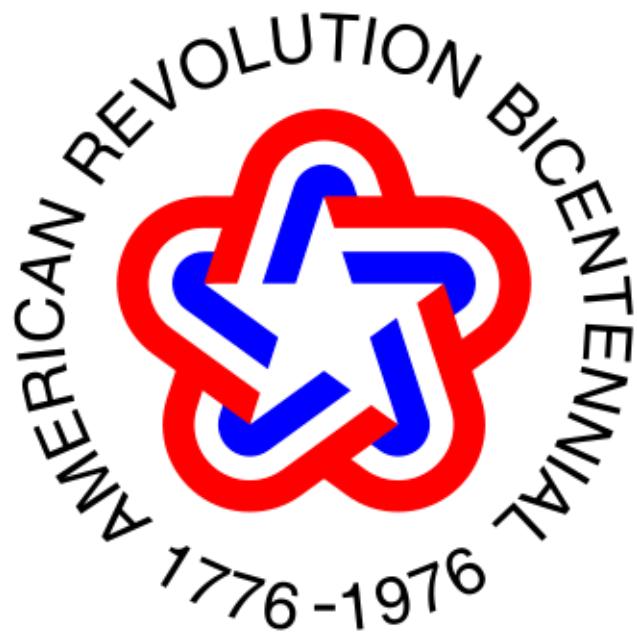


Denise Wagner, the costume director for Rutgers University's Theater, admires a vintage skirt, one of many in the WVHS collection (December 1, 2025)

Please Renew Your WVHS Dues. Society Year 2025-2026 began on September 1. Since our dues are low, please consider “rounding up.” Many members do. Please see the details for payment at <https://www.wvalleyhs.org/join-us-2/>

A Membership List Will Be Published Soon: Based on dues received in December. A future email will explain how members can “opt out” if they prefer not to include their name and/or other data.

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.



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 National Trust for Historic Preservation, according to its website, is a privately-funded nonprofit, formed to help communities keep their historic places. Those places make a community unique, help the economy, and create a sense of belonging. Recently, the group filed a suit in the US District Court for the District of Columbia against various individuals and agencies of the government, asserting that the construction at the White House ballroom is unlawful. It asks the court to halt further construction until certain requirements are met.



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’ December Meeting:

- Providing funding for work at the Franklinville School is a continuing issue.
- More funds are needed to frame the US flag, planned for the front of the 1895’s second-floor classroom.

Calendar of Events for WVHS Society Year 2025-2026

- 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 School Open House
- May 4 (Mon) 7 PM, Biennial Membership Meeting and 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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