
Wissahickon Valley Historical Society ~ Volume 5, Number 12

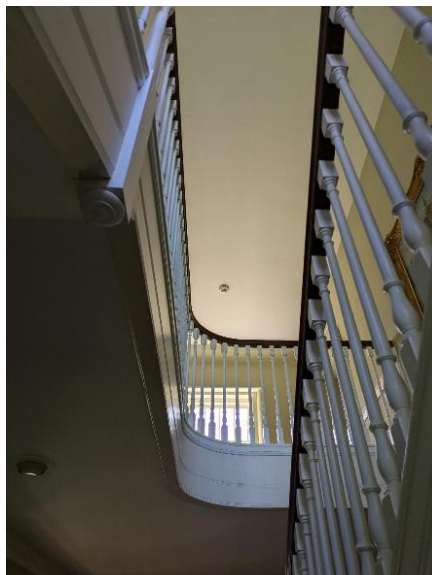
The Valley Crier



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

Huzzah for 250 Years!

Save the Date: Sunday, October 4, 12 Noon: WVHS will hold its yearly fund-raiser luncheon at the Whitpain Farm's historic Manor House! The event will honor Marie and Tom Goldkamp for their decades of service to historic preservation in Whitpain. More details are coming soon. The lovely Manor House's staircase is pictured below.



WVHS Receives State Grant!: A Keystone Historic Preservation Grant, a “matching” grant of over \$8,200 to provide HVAC at the Franklinville School. (There is no HVAC presently!) WVHS will match the grant by raising another \$8,200. The grant allows work to begin on September 1. HVAC is needed before interior painting can begin.

Grant amounts ranged from \$5,000 to \$100,000 for construction projects. All grants require a 50-50 cash match and are “awarded through a rigorous selection process,” according to a press release.

Please help “match” the state’s funding! Mark your contribution as “FS.”
Donations by *Venmo*, *PayPal*, or Check: www.WValleyHS.org/Donate/

A BLOG--Details about the Keystone Grant Program Funds for Semiquincentennial Projects, Ready for the Tricentennial: On June 17, 2026, Grant Manager Karen Arnold published, in part, that “the grant program again saw an 8% increase in the number of applications over last year with requests over \$7,561,262.52. This funding furthers our partner’s efforts to preserve and celebrate tangible history for the future.

“PHMC’s initiative in this Keystone round focused on projects that were connected to this Summer’s 2026’s Semiquincentennial celebrations. [America250 and the Keystone Historic Preservation Grant Program](#) hoped to foster heritage programming from the colonial era to the modern age as part of [America250PA](#) celebration. Our applicants shared their unique lectures, exhibits, events and projects that explore themes of democracy, innovation, place, and history....”

Work Continues at Skippack Pike Toll Booth: Restoration will be completed before the building is moved to Prophecy Creek Park. Vice President Joe Langella and member Larry Mulligan have removed the shingles, doors and windows as a first step. Next the Toll Booth will be moved to a nearby paved driveway, so work can begin on preparation and painting.



The Skippack Pike Toll Booth with windows and doors removed

Construction at Skippack Pike and School Road: The front lawn at the 1895 School shows preparation for the PennDOT construction project before the bulldozer arrived. The front wall will be removed and then rebuilt in a new location, closer to the building.



After this photo was taken, a bulldozer removed this strip of lawn along School Road.



The remains of the old wall, which used to stand along School Road, now uncovered by construction.



To begin the project, workers cleaned the drain at the corner.

Official Notice--School Road to be Closed for 4 Weeks: A

ReadyMontco Alert announces the following—"Starting Thursday July 16th, School Road will be closed at Skippack Pike for what we hope will only be 4 weeks. The daily closure will be from 9am to 3pm, Monday through Friday. Utility companies will be conducting work near this intersection. Residents on School Road will have access to their driveways at all times; except if there is work right in front of your driveway, in which case it would be a temporary shutdown. Detour signs will be in place for commuters that use School Rd. Please use DeKalb Pike, Morris Road, and Skippack Pike to navigate around the School Road closure during the closure times."

So far, both driveways to the 1895 School have been open.

Have you Heard of a George Griebar / Grieber / Grieben / Grieбан...?

WVHS was contacted by the Museum of Cape May County to find out more about this *American Revolution soldier*. The document showing he took the Oath in December 1777 in Whitpain Township was discovered recently in a Bible! It shows that he was sworn in for military service by Andrew Knox, a local hero, who served on our area's Committee of Safety. Knox is so well known that his door is on display at the Historical Society of Montgomery County! Read more about him and two of the Tories who attacked him and were hanged at Whitpain locations you know. See the book *Whitpain...Crossroads in Time*, PAGE 63:

<https://www.wvalleyhs.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Whitpain.-Crossroads-in-Time-Digital-Verion.pdf> .



The 1777 door of Andrew Knox's house on display at the Historical Society of Montgomery County, showing bullet holes.

Colonial Milestones: Help is still needed for a volunteer to visit and collect data about the markers in our area. The Whitemarsh Township Milestone, broken in half during road construction, is being repaired.

Report on the WVHS Ambler Walking Tours: Who took the Ambler Walking Tour during the spring? The list includes these registrants:

- 8 from Ambler
- 6 from Philadelphia
- 4 from Glenside
- 1 each from Doylestown, Lafayette Hill, Lansdale, New Hope, and Plymouth Meeting

A total of 47 guests took the tour. For information about the tours, please contact AmblerStorytellers@Gmail.com.

Announcing: For the Franklinville School and the 1895 School, WVHS Offers “Hours by Appointment” during the Summer. And we mean it! Please call or email the WVHS for a tour of our schools, both listed in the National Register of Historic Places: Info@WValleyHS.com

Franklinville School Restoration: Verco Painting still has work to do, but an Open House is set for Sunday, October 5, 1-3 PM.



*The attic vent opening, where squirrels used to enter
(Photo from Barry Johnson, July 13, 2026)*



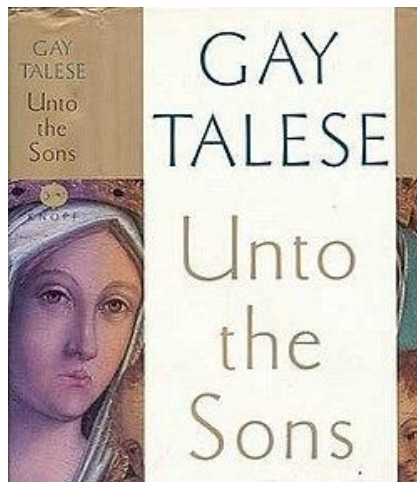
The back of the vent with screens to keep out insects and squirrels



Photo by Steve Vereb, proud craftsman who rebuilt the attic vent cover at the Franklinville School. Precise work demanded. He had to bend the wood (spring 2026).

Brown Bag Lunch Coming to 1895 School: Each person brings their own lunch, but WVHS will supply some beverages. A member will be the volunteer speaker/leader for the day. Our first Brown Bag Event will be held by former WVHS president Frank Russo, a mighty entertaining fellow. Have lunch, learn history, and enjoy your day! The first Brown Bag Lunch is scheduled for Thursday, November 5, at 12 Noon.

Distinguished Writer's Notes Come to WVHS: Author Gay Talese wrote *Unto the Sons* about his family's experiences in Ambler. Like many Ambler residents, one of his relatives came from Maida, Italy, enticed by a job for the Keasbey and Mattison Company. The WVHS museum holds the book's original manuscript. This month, it has acquired the notes and records he used as he prepared the historical novel. His file box, packed with data, reveals that he tried to be historically accurate. One reporter said that Talese "dug so deep for his roots it's a wonder he didn't come out in China." The items will be accessioned, listed on the website, and available to journalists and researchers.



PA Cultural Institutions Directory: PHMC in April 2026 created a directory of nonprofit organizations to encourage networking. WVHS has been added to the list, available here:

<https://culturalinstitutionsdirectory-pa-share.hub.arcgis.com/>

New Gift to the WVHS Collection: John Elterich, who lives in Bloomington IL, sent us two boxes of his Ambler family's precious old items: two embroidery pictures, an Ambler souvenir plate, an Ambler fire company 100th Anniversary book, a photo of the Mattison Avenue School, several items from the Wissahickon High School (with three volumes of the *Ilium*), and extensive records and photographs from the Colony Club. WVHS is grateful for his contribution!

Evans-Mumbower Mill Open House: The mill will hold Open House on Sunday, August 30, 1-3 PM. It's nearby and a fantastic historic site! Details and registration are here:

<https://wissahickontrails.org/events/mill-open-house-7>



Visit the nearby Evans-Mumbower Mill to see it grind corn. Few restored mills are true working mills.

Homiller House Torn Down: The Homiller House was demolished in July. First, the windows were taken out. Then the structure was taken apart, and the scraps were sorted into piles: wood, stone, and metals. Within a day, the lot was leveled, rolled, and covered with straw (perhaps for seed). The lovely old home vanished quickly. As a former board member used to say, “Once it’s gone, it’s gone forever!”



The Homiller House on Tennis Avenue with its windows removed. (Old glass is sold online for property owners replacing the glass at historic structures.)



Back stairs from the kitchen to second floor. Note the floral curtain fabric on the left. Its remnants appeared in a later pile of rubble. Note also the old board-and-batten door. This photo was taken on the day before the tear-down.



A pile of wood from the Homiller House



This pile contains an oil tank, a water heater, and what might be a refrigerator door.

More about the WVHS Scholarship Winner: Wissahickon High School has notified WVHS that our scholarship winner, Oliver Coleman, will attend Hillsdale College. Started in 1844, it is a private, nonsectarian, Christian liberal arts college. Its curriculum emphasizes the Great Books and the Constitution, according to *Wikipedia*.

Preserving the Liberty Bell: A Penn State Behrend research team is using advanced 3D imaging technology to preserve “one of the country’s most powerful symbols of independence: the Liberty Bell.” A student who worked on the project explains, “The Liberty Bell belongs to everyone. A free, high-resolution digital twin means people can study it, experience it, and build on it in ways that weren’t possible before.” Penn State reports that the project includes

- **Laser-line scanning** created a digital replica of the bell, showing surface details three to seven times thinner than a human hair.
- **LiDAR scanning** generated a navigable 3D “point cloud” of the bell, mount and exhibit space.
- **Structured-light scanning** captured additional surface details, including pitting in the bronze surface of the bell. The scan also preserves the bell’s most famous feature — the crack that silenced it in 1846.
- A **photogrammetry scan** created a highly detailed 3D digital mesh by overlapping a series of 2D photographs of the bell and its yoke, which was cut from American elm.

Outstanding Lancaster farm for sale: WVHS has been contacted by the owners of Windswept Farm, which is for sale. Know a buyer? The ten-acre property includes a 1740 log cabin; an 1840 bank barn, registered with the Historic Barn and Farm Foundation; an improved house; and awards for preservation! Details and more pictures are on the website:

www.windsweptfarm@life.



A classic 19th-century red bank-barn with entrance to the upper, hay-loft level by a soil ramp on one side and with, on the opposite side, protection provided by a forebay (an overhang).

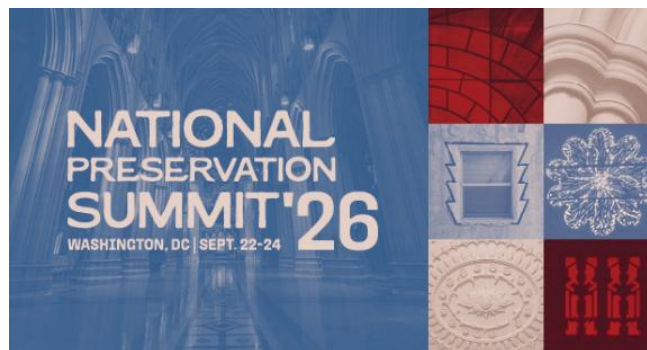
1776 Reminders That “Rock” the Community: Volunteers painted 100 rocks to be distributed throughout the community, a joint venture between the DAR Gwynedd Chapter and the Wissahickon Public Library, Ambler Branch. The rocks are meant to educate and create patriotic spirit. Each rock has a QR code that links participants to educational sites, including an *America 250* reading list, information on the Declaration of Independence, and a quiz to see if the reader could pass our National Citizenship Test.



***Area residents will find these 1776 rocks in public places,
reminders of our country's proud 250 years.***

National Preservation Summit: Attend in person in Washington DC or online on September 22-24. Details are here:

https://savingplaces.org/summit-registration?utm_source=Email



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

Montco Monthly, A New Newsletter for Montgomery County:

<https://mail.aol.com/d/list/referrer=newMail&folders=1&accountIds=1&listFilter=NEWMAIL/messages/AANyPMqz0abWtCURKdkOzMJiZsp>

Montgomery County America 250, Calendar of Events:

<https://www.montgomerycountypa.gov/explore-county/celebrate-america-250>

Helpers Wanted: WVHS needs help! Since the pandemic, we have been losing volunteers, and most of our group's responsibilities are completed by the board members. They need help! As part of the weekly "Volunteer Day" 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 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

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.

Volunteer Day has been changing: Due to summer schedules, please call or send an email before arriving. There are a variety of chores, including dusting, refolding fabrics, and cataloguing/accessioning new donations to the museum. For days and times (*they sometimes vary*), PLEASE email Info@WValleyHS.org.

WVHS Volunteer/New-Member Orientation: If you are a new member and/or want 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.

Please Pay Your Dues: Dues collection is beginning for the 2026-2027 Society Year, which starts on September 1. If you have questions, please email to Info@WValleyHS.org. Pay by *Venmo*, *PayPal*, or check at <https://www.wvalleyhs.org/join-us-2/>

From the Board of Directors Meeting, July 2026:

- The board is considering the next steps in restoration at the Franklinville School and the 1895 School.
- WVHS has made a purchase of acid-free archival materials.
- Emily Pope is designing a flyer, a new initiative, to promote the Speakers’ Series for Society Year 2026-2027.

Calendar of Events for WVHS Society Year 2026-2027

- Sept 14 (Monday), John Schwartz, Bucks County Militia, “Daniel Morgan”
- Sept 27 (Sunday), 1-3PM, 1895 School Open House
- Oct 4 (Sunday), 12 Noon, LUNCHEON at Whitpain Farm’s Manor House
- Oct 12 (Monday), 7 PM, Jim Segrave-Daly, Historian, “History of the US Supreme Court”
- Oct 25 (Sunday), 1-3 PM, Franklinville School Open House
- Nov 5 (Thursday), 12 Noon, Brown Bag Lunch with Frank Russo, WVHS’s first president, at 1895 School
- Nov 9 (Monday), 7 PM, Matthew Kalos, PhD, Brookdale College, American Revolution topic
- Dec 14 (Monday), 6:30 PM, Holiday Party
- Jan, No meeting
- Feb 8 (Monday), 7 PM, Show and Tell
- Mar 8 (Monday), 7 PM, Suzanne Johnston, DEd, “This Old Home” (Historic American Revolution buildings in our neighborhood)
- Apr 12 (Monday), 7 PM, Julie Lawson, Historian at St. Thomas Church, “Andrew Gilkeson and Gilkey’s Corner”
- May 10 (Date may change), 7 PM, Liz Bauer, DAR Museum, “Fashion and National Identity after the American Revolution”
- June 14 (Monday), 6:30 PM, Pot-luck Picnic and 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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