
Wissahickon Valley Historical Society ~ Volume 6, Number 1

The Valley Crier



Sept 2026.....Celebrating our 51st Year!

Huzzah for 250 Years!

Save the Date: Sunday, October 4, 12 Noon at Whitpain Farm's historic Manor House! The event will honor Marie and Tom Goldkamp for their decades of service to historic preservation in Whitpain. WVHS will be emailing more details soon.



Whitpain Farm's large and lovely Manor House (part of it built in 1704)

Dues are due: The WVHS Society Year begins on September 1, so dues for the coming year are now due. The dues rate is the same as last year, but please consider “rounding up” because the historical society’s fixed expenses, such as heating oil, continue to rise. As a result, what we collect in dues does not cover our basic expenses. We are depending on our members’ generosity to help us balance the budget! Payments can be made electronically or by check. For details, please go to <https://www.wvalleyhs.org/join-us-2/m>.

Announcing the September Meeting’ Speaker: Please join us on Monday, September 14, at 7 PM, to learn more about the formation of the militias, the part-time military groups who arose to defend local towns and disrupt British troops. Speaker John Schwartz will discuss the militia system in Pennsylvania during the Philadelphia Campaign of 1777, focusing on the townships in the Wissahickon Valley. From Northeast Philadelphia, Schwartz is retired from the United States Army Reserve in 2005 as a Chief Warrant Officer 4 after 32 years. He is a member of a living history group called the First Crossing Volunteers in Newtown, PA, where he discusses the local militias of Bucks County. He belongs to at least eight different organizations supporting Revolutionary War sites in the Delaware Valley area, and he is training to be a tour guide at the Moland House in Hartsville, Bucks County.



1896 U.S. Flag for WVHS: As part of the September meeting, the flag will be presented for the first time. The flag is the society's *America 250* project. Part of the WVHS collection since 1994, but in a box, it will be framed in museum-quality glass and put on display at the 1895 School's second-floor classroom.



The 25-star flag, in the process of being framed (August 21, 2026)

Whitpain Community Day is Saturday, Sept 26, 12-4 pm: Please help out at the WVHS table, especially at set-up and clean-up time. To help, please email to Info@WValleyHS.org



WVHS Receives State Grant!: A Keystone Historic Preservation Grant, a “matching” grant of over \$8,200, will 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 statewide ranged from \$5,000 to \$100,000 for construction projects. All grants, according to a press release, require a 50-50 cash match and are “awarded through a rigorous selection process.”

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

Funds for the grant come from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC). Seven projects in southeastern Pennsylvania received grants. Recipients were those who emphasized their *America 250* celebrations.

According to a PHMC press release, “The grants, announced on June 11...are funded by a portion of state realty transfer tax revenue that is transferred to the Keystone Recreation, Park & Conservation Fund.”

Keystone
HISTORIC
PRESERVATION
GRANT
Project

Work Continues at Skippack Pike Toll Booth: Restoration is slowly making progress at the Toll Booth. David Carhart of Star Painting will restore the stained-glass windows. Member Larry Mulligan has removed some rotten wood, and some of the soil under the Toll Booth has been moved to lift the structure. It is being reinforced so it can be moved from grass to pavement for the next step in its restoration.



The Skippack Pike Toll Booth, lifted from the soil

Road Construction at Skippack Pike and School Road: Workers have removed part of the side yard at the 1895 School. The intersection is closed from 9 am until 3 pm on weekdays, but the driveway from Skippack Pike to the Blue Bell Korean Presbyterian Church is always open to the 1895 School's visitors.



Supplies stored at the parking lot



Underground work along Skippack Pike at School Road



School Road appears to be a lane wider, with the land taken from the 1895 School's side yard (Aug 11, 2026)!



***The WVHS sign, dug up and on the lawn (August 16, 2026)
Plans are in progress to re-do the sign.***



Got pipe? These are concrete drainage culverts that will be installed along School Road (August 16, 2026)

Museum Item Found to have “Death Radius”: Several years ago, Jean Bellavance donated a Victorian home fire grenade (fire extinguisher), which came from her mother’s house in New York. It sat on the work table for several months at WVHS, and then was finally accessioned and stored in Closet B. In July, new board member Emily Pope was acquainting herself with the items there, so she pulled it out to look at it. These old grenades look like glass lightbulbs with clear fluid inside. Then Pope Googled fire grenades. She discovered that they can emit dangerous gases, and if one is cracked, the result can be a “mustard gas,” the gas used during WWI, which causes permanent nerve damage. The next day, President Carol Kalos emailed the Philadelphia Fireman’s Hall Museum to see if they wanted the item. No thanks, they said, too dangerous. Then Kalos contacted members Neil and Joe Bradley, who are Centre Square Firefighters. That evening Joe came immediately to remove the fire

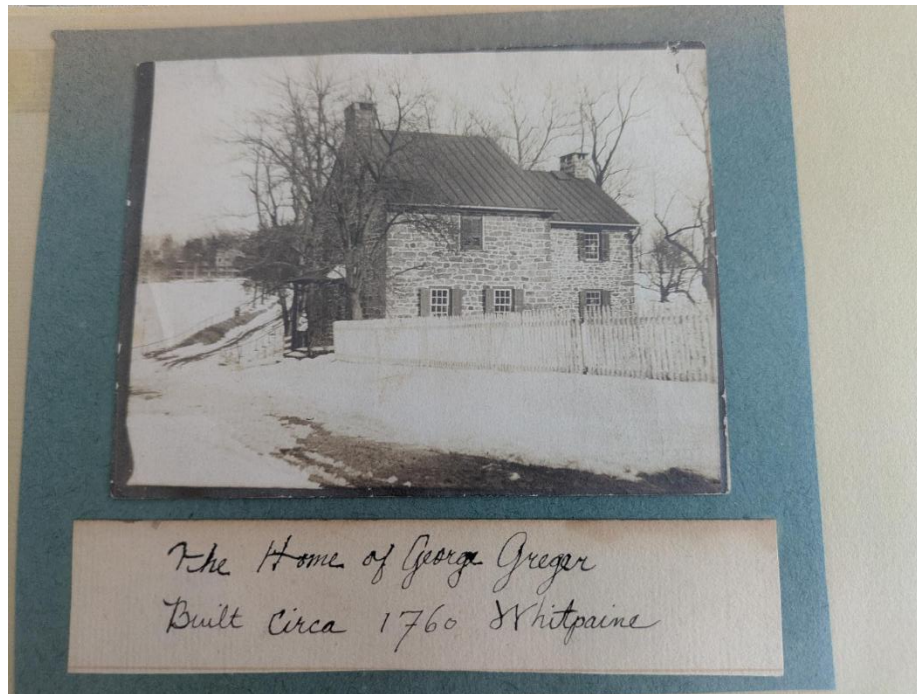
grenade. He says it is at the fire house, but it may go to train firefighters at the Montgomery County Fire Academy.



Victorian-era fire grenades give off “mustard gas.”

Have You Heard of a George Griebar / Grieber / Grieben / Griebar...?

Possible photo of 1760 Residence Found: 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 there recently. Last week, President Carol Kalos ran across an image in the WVHS files, showing “The House of George Greger, Built Circa 1760 Whitpaine.” Past President Frank Russo relates that the house is located across from Boehm’s Church. Could this be the same person? Perhaps it is since spelling was not standardized in those days.



"The House of George Greger, Built Circa 1760 Whitpaine"

WVHS Membership Going Strong: During Society Year 2025-2026, the number of Paid Memberships reached over 120! Some of those are singles and some couples. In addition to that group, another 700+ email addresses discover the news of WVHS activities by receiving the *Valley Crier*. This means hundreds of local citizens care about preserving local history! Many thanks to our Membership Chairman (and Vice President), Joe Langella. Huzzah!

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.

Announcing: For the Franklinville School and the 1895 School, WVHS Offers “Hours by Appointment.” 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 is working away. An Open House is set for Sunday, October 25, 1-3 PM.



***Newly-painted exterior wall and shutters at the Franklinville School,
August 18, 2026***

Franklinville School--What is 173 inches? The width of the opening in the fence to the driveway at Franklinville School. Hundreds of elementary students used to visit there. Did a big yellow school bus drive up the hump and through the fence? No. Students were car-pooled from their school to our school, according to board member Marie Goldkamp, who was the docent for those groups.



Fence Opening at the Franklinville School

Monthly History Articles Cease Publication: President Carol Kalos has been notified that *Stroll Blue Bell*, a social magazine for residents of Blue Bell Country Club, has ceased printing. When the final publication becomes available, WVHS will have presented a total of 76 local history articles to the magazine. The first 14 articles were written by then-President Russ Bellavance between 2015 and 2017. Kalos contributed 61 articles with the last one printed in August. (A final 62nd article will be published as a farewell, in electronic format, in September.) Many thanks to the magazine's publisher, Kevin Burke, and its editor, Tamra Phillips, for helping WVHS promote our area's rich history. (Phillips spoke in February 2022 at WVHS on "A History of Whitpain Township's Grace Baptist Church")

to honor its 150th anniversary.) All the *Stroll* articles are reprinted on the WVHS website: <https://www.wvalleyhs.org/blue-bells-finest/>.



Stroll articles always contained photos of the area's historic buildings, this one on School Road.

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. His topic will be “Whatchamacallits and Thig-a-ma-jigs: Unusual Objects of the 18th Century and their Usage.” Have lunch, learn history, and enjoy your day! The first Brown Bag Lunch is scheduled for Thursday, November 5, at 12 Noon.

Two Donors Send Items for the Museum: Member Bernadette Dougherty has sent several boxes of Ambler items to be added to our research library. Also, the complete records from the Woman's Club of Whitpain have been donated, including files, scrapbooks, certificates, and even the group's gavel.



Scrapbook and gavel decorated with the official flower, red and white carnations

WVHS Is Maintaining Community: When a building is preserved, besides keeping tons of materials out of the landfill, another advantage is that we are saving community. Preservation work is not just about preservation for its own sake; it provides connections to the past. Redevelopment can ruin that. An online source states, “The public’s commitment to historic sites and the heritage they represent is foundational to how we experience a place and what it means to be part of a community with a shared history.”

Whitpain Township Named a “Bird Town”: It is PA’s 108th Bird Town, along with Upper Dublin and Lower Gwynedd and Horsham Townships. These communities, according to the township, are “committed to protecting birds through habitat restoration, municipal actions and other

conservation measures.... Birds signify healthy ecosystems and can reduce pests and benefit mental health.”



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, offer 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

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/>

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

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.

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.

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.

From the Board of Directors Meeting, August 2026:

- The board is considering the next steps in restoration at the Franklinville School and the 1895 School.
- The state's Grant Manager, Karen Arnold, will visit the Franklinville School in September to offer advice about restoring the 1930s back patio.
- Researchers are trying to find two items at the 1895 School. Please let us know if you know where these items are stored: a disc containing the Clara Beck photos and marble notebooks with notes from author Gay Talese.

Calendar of Events for WVHS Society Year 2026-2027

- Sept 14 (Monday), John Schwartz, Bucks County Militia, “Forming the Local County Militias”
- 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, “Daniel Morgan: American Revolution Hero”
- 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 on “Whatchamacallits and Thig-a-ma-jigs: Unusual Objects of the 18th Century and their Usage.”
- Nov 9 (Monday), 7 PM, Matthew Kalos, PhD, Brookdale College, “The Archaeology and Memory of the Paoli Battlefield”
- 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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