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Wissahickon Valley Historical Society ~ Volume 6, Number 3

The Valley Crier



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

Huzzah for 250 Years!

November Events at 1895 School:

- ***Nov 5, Noon, Brown Bag Lunch (Frank Russo)***
- ***Nov 9, 7 PM, Speaker Series (Matt Kalos)***
- ***Nov 7 and 21, 3 PM, Ambler Walking Tour***
- ***Nov 16, 11:30 AM, Colonial Milestone Celebration***

Announcing the November Meeting Speaker: We will meet on Monday, November 9th, at 7 PM, as Matthew Kalos relates "The Archaeology and Memory of the Paoli Battlefield." The location was the site of a Patriot encampment. Against the rules of battle, British soldiers used bayonets to stab the sleeping troops. As a result, "Remember Paoli" became the battle cry of the American Revolution. The site of this "Paoli Massacre" has become an ongoing military memorial. Over the years, U.S. Veterans continue to meet at the site where the first Memorial Day Parade was held, and Kalos will examine the role of memory at battlefield sites. Kalos earned his PhD in Anthropology from Temple University, led archaeological field work at Valley Forge, and is a tenured professor at Brookdale College in

New Jersey. Kalos recently co-edited the book, *The Archaeology of the American Revolution*.



This monument marks Patriot burials at the Battle of Paoli: "Remember Paoli" became the battle cry of the American Revolution.

Past President Frank Russo to Lead Brown Bag Lunch at 1895 School: Each person brings their own lunch, and WVHS will supply some beverages. 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! This Brown Bag Lunch is scheduled for Thursday, November 5, at 12 Noon. A $5 fee will be collected at the door. Members wishing to lead a "Brown-Bag Lunch" on any history topic should contact WVHS at ***Info@WValleyHS.org***.

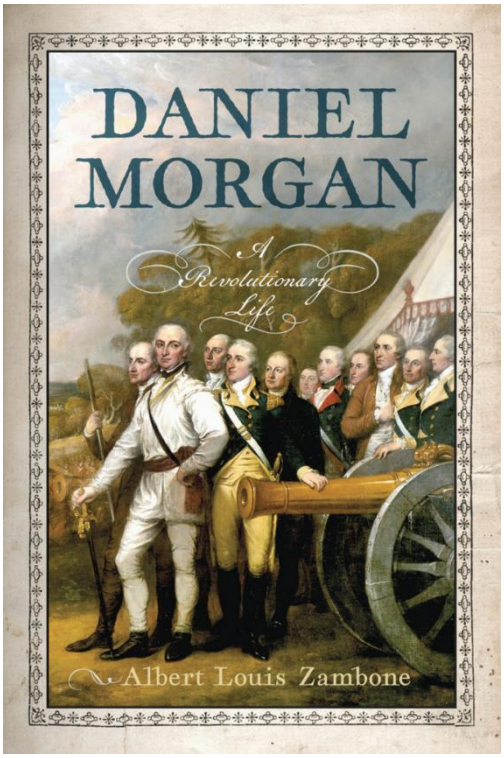


WVHS Seeking Funds for its "Match" Grant for Franklinville School: A Keystone Historic Preservation Grant, a "matching" grant of over $8,200, is providing HVAC at the Franklinville School. (There was no HVAC prior to October's installation!) WVHS will match the grant by raising another $8,200. HVAC was needed before interior painting can begin. Donations can be made by check, made out to "WVHS," and mailed to PO Box 96, Ambler 19002, or online at ***www.WValleyHS.org/Donate***

Dues are due: The 2026-2027 WVHS Society Year began on September 1, so dues for this 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. If you feel inspired and are in a position to give beyond dues, additional donations are always appreciated and make a difference for WVHS. Payments can be made electronically or by check. For details, please go to ***https://www.wvalleyhs.org/join-us-2/m*.**

Celebration for Repaired Colonial Milestone at Gwynedd Mercy University: On Monday, November 16, at 11:30 AM, join WVHS and Gwynedd Mercy University to celebrate the completion of repairs to the Colonial-era roadside mile marker. Learn the history of these markers and the repair used to restore this one. Parking instructions will be emailed prior to the event. See the photos below.

October's Speaker Describes Daniel Morgan's Leadership: Jim Segrave-Daly wowed the audience with his knowledge and presentation about Morgan's strategy during the American Revolution. He explained that General Washington wisely asked for advice from his officers. In many cases, Morgan and others would advise him not to attack, recognizing that the Patriots did not need to win, they simply needed "not to lose." Their mission became to "bleed the British," taking advantage of the shortage of supplies. The British expected help from Tory Colonists but received little.



Recommended book about Daniel Morgan by Albert Zambone

Unusual Chair Donated at October's Meeting: Former WVHS member Peg Krengel described the chair she donated to the WVHS collection,

found at a church sale for $2! With a back that is both spindles and ladder-back design, it is inscribed “Heorot Ambler” on the bottom and was probably made in the 1800s. She also used photos to illustrate four other types of antique chair characteristics.



***Bottom of the old chair says, “Heorot, Ambler PA.” A Google search reveals that “Heorot is the legendary royal mead-hall built by King Hrothgar in the Old English epic poem* Beowulf.”**

Luncheon Honors the Goldkamps: Over 45 guests attended the October luncheon, seated together in the large dining room of the Whitpain Farm’s Manor House. The buffet luncheon was prepared by il Giardino of Spring House. Set-up and clean-up were accomplished by a wonderful group of volunteers. Member Dottie MacDermott decorated the tables; President Carol Kalos offered the history of the 1704 structure; Past President Frank Russo presented the rich history of the 450 acres of the original property;

and Past President Russ Bellavance summarized the many contributions to our community by Marie and Tom Goldkamp. Besides serving on local boards, their leadership and volunteer hours saved the 1858 one-room Franklinville School, now owned by WVHS and listed in the National Register of Historic Places.



Tom and Marie Goldkamp cutting cake, part of the dessert menu. The icing spells out, "WVHS—Thank you Marie & Tom Goldkamp."

Thank you to the 2026 Luncheon Committee for their hard work!: Abe Addonizio, Judy Baigis, Jeannie and Russ Bellavance, Brenda Doll, Marie Goldkamp, Ethel Hutchinson, Barry Johnson, Marty Kalos, Joe Langella, Elizabeth Lotz, Dottie MacDermott, Emily Pope, and Frank Russo.

Haunted Fireplace at the Whitpain Farm's Manor House: George Bisbing occupied the house during the American Revolution. He added to the original 1704 house by building the room with a corner fireplace, now used as the library, where the Luncheon's appetizers were served. He supposedly lined the new fireplace with the headstones of Hessian soldiers buried on the property. A frugal man, he burned cornstalks in his fireplace to avoid the cost of wood. Legend says that the Hessians' souls entered the cornstalks, who then danced on the hearth. Since Bisbing's death, he dances with them.



The Manor House's fireplace, where ghosts of Hessian soldiers, buried on the property, dance as cornstalks on the hearth.

WVHS 2026 Luncheon: Thank you to the following businesses:

- **Ambler Pizza**
- **Blue Bell Inn**
- **Cantina Feliz**
- **Chanticleer, a pleasure garden**
- **Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site**
- **Flirt, Women's boutique**
- **From the Boot, Ambler**
- **Giant Food Market**
- **Giuseppe's Italian Restaurant and Pizza**
- **Graze Craze**
- **Il Giardino Italian Cuisine**
- **Lei Barry Real Estate, Keller Williams**
- **Longwood Gardens**
- **Lucky's Roadside Stand at Ridge Hall**
- **McCaffrey's Food Stores**
- **Museum of the American Revolution**
- **National Liberty Museum**
- **Normandy Farm**
- **P.J. Whelihan's**
- **Panache**
- **Philadelphia Museum of Art**
- **Phil's Tavern**
- **Quintessence Theatre**
- **Radice**
- **Reading Fightin Phils**
- **Russell Roofing**
- **Sorelle Hair Studio**
- **Studio Ambler**
- **Tannery Run Brew Works**
- **Turning Point**
- **Wilma Theater**
- **Winterthur**

List incomplete

Dine and Donate at Tannery Run Brew Works: Thank you to those who participated in this October 15th event, a fun fund-raiser for WVHS! The brew is excellent!



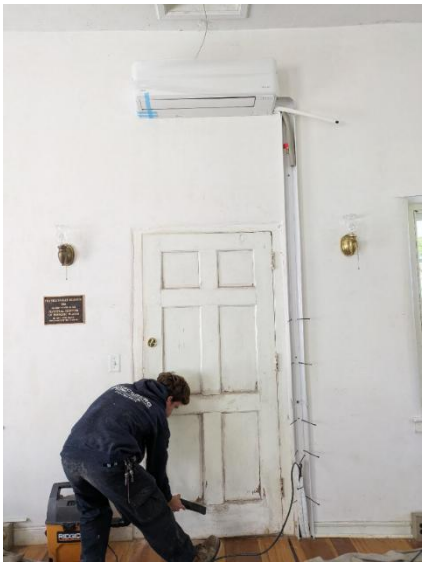
At the "Dine and Donate" was Zibi's "reserved" table, where WVHS friends gather often.

Open House at the Franklinville School: WVHS held its fall Open House at the Franklinville School on Sunday, October 25. Greeting guests were Sally Zeller, Joan Duxbury, and Ethel Hutchinson, and board members Barry Johnson, and Marie and Tom Goldkamp. WVHS offered a special invitation to residents of the nearby Windemere community.



Open House at the Franklinville School, Fall 2025

HVAC Installation Discovers Franklinville School's Construction with 20-inch Walls: The HVAC installers had to drill a hole through the outside wall. They discovered that it is 20 inches thick! See the photos below. A worker pulled a conduit from the front door diagonally under the floor to the back of the building, where it went outside. Since the crawl space is a mere 36 inches tall, he reported that he was "a bit claustrophobic!"



Part of the system installed above the front door with the conduit hidden along the hinge



The outdoor portion of the HVAC, located not far from the former outhouse! How times have changed!

Sad News: We have learned of the passing of member Bob Raines, husband of Christine. Always cheerful, Bob often attended our Speakers Series. Details are here***: https://aroundambler.com/mr-robert-bob-raines-an-award-winning-photographer-with-ambler-gazette-among-other-publications-has-passed-away-at-75/***

Work Continues at Skippack Pike Toll Booth: Restoration is slowly making progress at the Toll Booth. With members in charge, volunteers rolled it on plastic pipes over 100 feet from the grass to solid ground, so it can be worked on.





The Toll Booth, standing on blocks on a paved surface and ready for paint removal. The restored stained-glass windows will be completed for installation by spring.



Rotted wood at the doorway of the Toll Booth

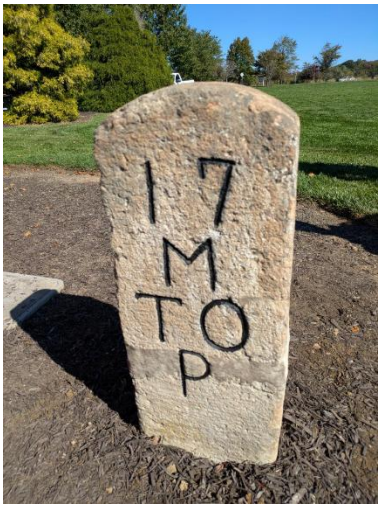
Ambler Walking Tours for Fall: Ambler Storytellers, a committee of WVHS, lead history tours of Butler Avenue. Appreciate new sites and hear their unusual stories! Tickets are $10 and proceeds go to restoring the Train Station's Freight House, now in storage. Each participant gets a coupon from Tannery Run Brew Works. Tours are held on Saturdays, starting at 3 PM. Upcoming dates are November 7 and 21, and December 5. See the QR for details and to register:

"Witness Houses" to be Honored: The owners of "Witness Houses," structures standing during the American Revolution, will be recognized at brief ceremonies to be held at local administrative meetings: Whitpain Township Board of Supervisors on November 4 at 6 PM; Ambler Borough Council on November 17 at 7 PM; and Lower Gwynedd Township on December 8 at 7 PM.

Broken Colonial Milestone Repaired: On October 9, President Carol Kalos met with two administrators from Gwynedd Mercy University, who escorted her across campus to the site where six university employees were ready to place its newly-repaired Colonial Milestone. The mile marker

used to stand along Sumneytown Pike, but the workers related that it had been hit by a truck and was found, broken, along the road. The repair project continued for months as rebar was placed through the center of the over-200 year-old stone to give it strength to stand for another few centuries. (There are eleven Colonial Mile Markers along Skippack Pike and Morris Road in Whitemarsh, Whitpain, and Worcester Townships.) The markers, placed by the Crown, were positioned to measure postal rates. The photos below explain the process of resetting the precious stone along Sumneytown Pike to a landscaped flower bed where it will be safer than before.

Colonial Milestones: Help is still needed for a volunteer to visit and collect data about the markers in our area. Please email to ***Info@WValleyHS.org*.**



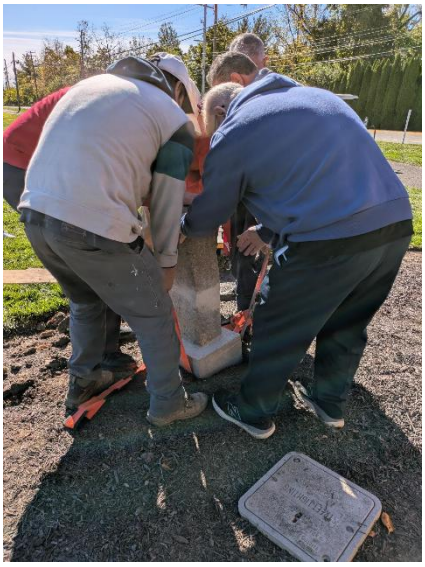
The "new" Colonial Milestone, recently restored and installed at Gwynedd Mercy University. Originally, it stood next to the road at their property.



Former site of the Milestone along Sumneytown Pike. Workers related that a truck hit it, broke it, and pushed it several yards down the road.



With the Gwynedd Mercy sign in the background, a skid loader (bobcat) delivered the Milestone to its new, safer site. Note the horizontal white line on the stone where it was repaired. (Workers feared that the top might again break off during this move). Also note that the underground portion of the stone is missing, severed when it was hit. It remains buried. Other markers in our area have as much stone below the soil level as above the soil level.



Using orange lifting straps, six strong men carefully hoisted the Milestone from the skid loader to the soil, which will be landscaped.



Workers dug a precise-size hole, then eased the heavy object into the hole. One worker tested to see if it now stands level. He was jokingly advised that the Milestone had not been level in 200 years, so he should not worry!

Road Construction at Skippack Pike and School Road: Work continues at the1895 School. Recently, soil was removed from around the front wall, exposing sections that had not felt the sun for over a hundred years. The wall will be removed, the stones stored, and then the wall will be replaced, closer to the building. A lane has been added to School Road, taking part of the 1895 School's side yard, and electrical work was completed so that a traffic signal can be installed.



The entrance to the parking lot from School Road is being widened.



Soil was removed from behind the wall, exposing the stones that used to be underground. (Oct 12, 2026)



Who knows what that slab of rock on the right might have been? A steppingstone from long ago? (Oct 12, 2026)



Construction at School Road's right lane, where it meets Skippack Pike (Oct 13, 2026)

Fall Display at 1895 School: Several volunteers have contributed to creating this lovely display that greets visitors to the school.



Display at the 1895 School in October 2026

National Historic Preservation Act…Contact your Senator: Sixty years ago, the National Historic Preservation Act became law. Since then, Section 106 has helped save historic places by asking government to "stop, look, and listen" to community voices. **Should federal projects be required to obtain community input?** Find out more at the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) and the National Trust for Historic Preservation: ***https://mail.aol.com/f/newMail/messages/AAGfMR0He3iHIFfUrGM72F8kRfi***

Conard-made Augers donated in October: William Barnhill of Pottstown visited the 1895 School to donate his display board of augers with wood handles, labeled by their size. The Conard Auger Mill in Ft. Washington, operated from 1810-1840, according to information at the 1895's tool exhibit.



Barnhill's collection of 1800s augers, added to WVHS collection

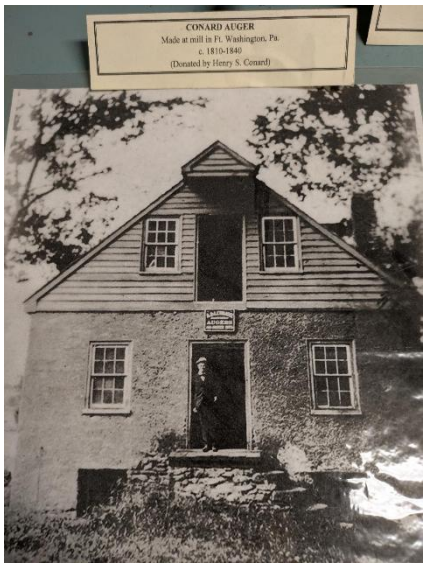


Photo of the Conard Auger Mill, 1810-1840

Ambler Buildings Will Not be Razed: In 2021, a developer planned to take down several buildings at Ambler's corner of Butler Avenue and North Main Street. (The corner with the Pizza Box.) However, the property has been sold, and the new owner will not demolish them. Instead, they will be updated and improved. Of special importance to WVHS is the old Ambler Hotel's stable/carriage house. It is a stone building with a magnificent truss roof, meaning the roof bridges the first-floor space. The lovely trusses are visible from the first floor. The building is located on Short Street, across from the site of the Ambler Train Station's Freight House (now in storage and waiting for a new location, thanks to a WVHS member). The Ambler Hotel was located beside what is now Harry's Taproom, built in 1916 as the Ambler Trust Company. Details are here: ***https://aroundambler.com/three-adjacent-buildings-sold-near-corner-of-butler-avenue-and-north-main-street-in-ambler/?sfnsn=mo***



Hotel Ambler (formerly Blackburn's Hotel), built in 1867. It burned down on Christmas Eve,1946. Today, Harry's Taproom stands to the right of this picture.

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***



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***

Montgomery County *America 250,* Calendar of Events:
https://www.montgomerycountypa.gov/explore-county/celebrate-america-250

Philadelphia's Robert Cornelius Took the World's First Selfie in 1839: He uncovered the lens, stepped into frame and held still for minutes. His 1839 portrait is now part of the Library of Congress' collection.



Read more

Fire at 1714 William Penn Inn: From *Around Ambler* (online 10-9-2026): "An October 9th fire has temporarily closed the William Penn Inn in Lower Gwynedd, a business that dates to 1714. According to Al Comly, the fire marshal of Lower Gwynedd Township, the fire started in the basement kitchen and spread through the ductwork to the roof. Comly offered that the fire was mainly contained to the duct work, which limited the amount of damage. No injuries were reported." Within days, portions of the business had reopened, but some sections were still closed for repairs. See the website for updates.

Helpers Wanted: WVHS needs help! Since the pandemic, we need more 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 changing 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***.

Lost and Found at the Archives: 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.

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, October 2026:

- The Keystone Grant sign has been placed on the rail fence in front of the Franklinville School. The grant funding paid for half of the cost of adding HVAC to the building.
- Information about the "Witness House" recognition ceremonies will be emailed to WVHS paid members and its email list as well.
- WVHS is investigating an application for a HARC grant to digitize old issues of *The Enterprise.*

Calendar of Events for WVHS Society Year 2026-2027

- 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"
- Nov 16 (Monday), 11:30 AM, Gwynedd Mercy University, Colonial Milestone Installation
- Dec 14 (Monday), 6:30 PM, Holiday Party (Pot-luck Dinner)
- 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 11 (Time TBA) Open House, Yost Log Cabin
- Apr 12 (Monday), 7 PM, Julie Lawson, Historian at St. Thomas Church, "Andrew Gilkeson and Gilkey's Corner"
- May 10, 7 PM, Liz Bauer, DAR Museum, "Fashion and National Identity after the American Revolution"
- May 16 (Sunday), 1-3 PM, Franklinville School, Open House
- 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.