

# Worcester Historical Society

## 2015 Membership Newsletter

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### Farmers' Union Hall Is Back, Better Than Ever!

This time last year, Farmers' Union Hall was a mess of soggy, broken floor boards, peeling paint, and water-soaked plaster. Most of the clothing, books, and maps were sequestered safely in boxes stacked five high on the stage upstairs. The hot-water pipes had burst in over a dozen places, spewing several inches of water over the floor on both levels. The mood was somber.

In April, we came back from that disaster better than ever, with freshly shellacked floors upstairs and a vaulted ceiling that is now sparkling clean. There really was a silver lining to the frozen-pipes disaster. In the Farm Museum, we were able to transform the dark northwest corner into an expanded exhibit on pork processing, which includes a 7-foot scalding trough as well as an impressive array of meat grinders and sausage stuffers, and even a 5-pound can for lard!



In the library, we were able to replace the rotting floor with the same type of fir boards that were used when the Hall was built over 100 years ago.

Thanks to Worcester Township, which owns the building, the exterior was freshly painted last year. The town's Public Works Department also graciously painted the walls upstairs, to help showcase our new exhibits (see below).


In last year's newsletter, we appealed to you, our members, for donations to allow us to replace water-damaged furniture and reference material. You answered our plea with a generosity that enabled us to replace all of our waterlogged bookshelves and reprint the booklets, maps, and interpretive signage that had been destroyed. Without you, we could not have reopened successfully. **Thank you!**

### The Lenni Lenape in Worcester

In November we unveiled a new exhibit featuring the tools and lifestyle of the Lenni Lenape, the first known settlers in this area.


#### WORCESTER'S FIRST RESIDENTS THE LENNI LENAPE

When the first European settlers arrived, the people living in present day New Jersey, eastern Pennsylvania, Delaware, and New York had already been here for several thousand years. They called themselves Lenni Lenape or "Real People." This area was abundant with game and had rich soil for raising crops such as corn, beans, squash and tobacco. The Lenape lived in settled villages, moving to a new location when the natural resources were depleted.




Lenape men and women had distinct roles. Men cleared the land, built the houses, and made dugout canoes. They did the fishing and hunted deer, elk and bear. They also trapped small animals as well as all types of wild fowl.

Women were responsible for planting and harvesting the crops and gathering wild foods. Some food was eaten fresh, but much of it was dried for later use. Women were skilled in making clay pots, weaving baskets, and preparing hides for clothes and shelters. Starting at an early age, children were taught the skills they would need as a member of their tribe.



For everyday use, fish were speared or caught on fish hooks made from bird claws. In the spring, when fish were spawning, a large net woven from plant fiber was used. Sinking stones were tied on at intervals for weights. The net was held by one man at the river's edge while the ongoes and



Clearing a new area for gardens meant removing trees. A fire was built against the trunk and kept burning until the tree fell. Wet clay was packed around the trunk to prevent it from burning upward and destroying the log. A stone axe was used to chip out the

#### HOW DID THEY DO IT

##### HOW DID THE LENAPE FISH WITHOUT FISHING RODS

##### HOW DID THE LENAPE CUT DOWN TREES WITHOUT A SAW

## Preserving Our Past To Insure Our Future

Worcester Historical Society

P.O. Box 112 Worcester, PA 19490



Our exhibit was opened with a program by local Native American interpreter Darius Puff, who entertained us with stories of the first settlers and their encounters with Europeans. His talk was accompanied by a colorful array of pelts, beaded items, stone and bone tools, and ornaments.

Visit us in the spring to see this fascinating exhibit. Along with arrowheads and spear points found in local farm fields, you will see many different hammer stones and scraping tools that the Lenape used to make their arrowheads, as well as the tools they made to work the soil, fish, hunt, and build their homes.

## Thank You to Our 2014 Donors!

Last year the Society was fortunate to have many donations come our way, to expand our interpretation of life in Worcester's past.

One of our exhibits-in-progress this year will be on the one-room schoolhouses in Worcester. Imagine our surprise when **Thelma Wood** mentioned that the bell from the Water Street schoolhouse was in her barn! When she and her husband, John, moved to another farm last year, she generously offered to donate the bell to the Society. Thanks to our go-to metal craftsman, Jay Rees, visitors will be able to ring this historic bell calling students to class in our one-room schoolhouse.

**Jon Cassell**, who grew up in Fairview Village and is currently living in Senegal, sent us several parchment deeds in excellent condition.

For decades, **Elwood Brunt** collected Native American artifacts in his museum on Weber Road, where he welcomed school tours and other visitors. This fall, he donated some of these artifacts and some antique household and farm items to the museum. We enjoyed hearing his stories of collecting spear points and arrowheads by following the farmer's plow across fields that were once Lenni Lenape hunting grounds.

**Tyler Straup**, a Worcester student, has also been scouring the ground for artifacts. Using a metal detector, he located some fascinating items at the Society's Dutchie Church, as well as on farmland near his home. His finds included a flat button, several old coins, and a trolley spike.

The **Whitpain Historical Society**, which merged last year with the Wissahickon Valley Historical Society, donated a turn-of-the-century school desk for our library exhibit of Worcester's first high school.

The family of **Sarah Slough Cook**, who was a dedicated volunteer at the museum, was kind enough to donate several items of clothing from three generations of the Slough family, along with two bricks from the Worcester School. They also created the Sarah Cook Memorial Fund, which will be used to fund exhibits and collections that were of special interest to Sarah.

**Jay and Cathy McKeever** visited the museum for the first time last year when they helped us move boxes back to the library after the renovations. They were so fascinated with the display of household items upstairs that they decided to donate a family heirloom — a 1920s-era electric wringer washing machine that still works!

Board member **Jim Thompson** donated children's clothing from the Markley and Meschter families. With the loan of several life-size dolls from board member **Mary Jane Rees**, we were able to display some of this clothing last fall.

Ambler resident **Gary Fuess**, who visited the museum last year with other members of the Whitpain and Wissahickon Valley Historical Societies, donated two cane-seat chairs to our library. Gary was kind enough to spend several mornings sharing with us his expertise in horse-drawn farm equipment, to make sure our tour guide interpretations in the Farm Museum are accurate.



## Join us for these events in 2015!

**OPEN HOUSE AT FARMERS' UNION HALL**, 2011 Valley Forge Road, Saturdays from 9 a.m. to noon, starting April 4.

**WHS ANNUAL FLEA MARKET**, Saturday, **June 6**, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., Worcester Township Community Hall, Fairview Village. To be a vendor, call 610-584-5620.

**PHOTO SCANNING DAY AT FARMERS' UNION HALL**, 2011 Valley Forge Road, Saturday, **June 13**, noon to 4 p.m. Bring your old photos to be scanned and added to our collection.

## Wish List

- Children's shoes, 19th & early 20th century
- Men's and women's shoes, 19th & early 20th century
- Pencil boxes
- School lunch pails or lunchboxes

## It's Not Your Ordinary Road Map

This 11x17 print looks like an early map of the area. The major roads were shown, along with taverns and churches, with very old names. Route 113 south of Skippack was labeled "Road to the Trap," and Route 29 north was "Great Swamp Road to Allin's Town," but the relative distances between the roads and landmarks were all wrong. Only the mile markers along Skippack Pike helped us determine which roads were which.

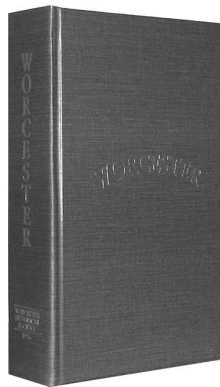
What kind of mapmaker names every tavern and church between Whitmarsh and Collegeville, but doesn't bother to show the distances to scale? How about an officer of the Continental Army making a troop placement map during the fall of 1777? We're not positive yet about the origin of the map, but it definitely shows the locations of the Continental Army's various encampments from October 3rd through late November. This period spans the date of the Battle of Germantown, which General Washington planned while staying at Peter Wentz's home in Worcester.



Come see this map on display in our museum!

## Get the Book!

*A History of Worcester Township* tells the story of Worcester: its inns, churches, schools, mills, villages, and residents, from the time of William Penn to the Bicentennial, including an index to over 200 pages of information on historic homes.



This 556-page book was first published in 1978 and is now in its third edition. This beautiful hard-bound edition, with index, is available from the Society for \$45. You can purchase a copy at Towne Book Center in Collegeville, Allen's Antiques in Center Point, or by contacting us at [info@worcesterhistorical.org](mailto:info@worcesterhistorical.org).

## Spring Flowers Fundraiser!

Would you like to beautify your property AND support WHS at the same time?


**Brent & Becky's Bulbs**, a premier bulb grower in Virginia, will donate a portion of each order to WHS to help us improve our museum for **you**, our visitors.

Just go to [www.bloominbucks.com](http://www.bloominbucks.com) and choose to support the Worcester Historical Society. You will then be taken to the website, where you can order from a huge selection of perennials, summer bulbs, and gardening supplies. A percentage of every sale comes directly to WHS. *It's so easy!*

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**Thank You!**

*Keeping Worcester's history alive*

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