

Worcester Historical Society

2018 Membership Newsletter

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100 Years of Quilts

Our spring program featured dozens of beautiful quilts, including some made by women who hailed from Worcester. The quilts spanned a century, from 1840 to 1940. The program was presented by Candace Perry, Curator of Collections at the Schwenkfelder Heritage Center in Pennsylvania.

Perry explained that although quilts were practical household items, intended for warmth, they were also a way for women to express their creativity, as well as their faith. Block patterns and quilt designs could include symbols of religious and cultural values, such as friendship and fidelity.



Photo courtesy of Schwenkfelder Heritage Center

This Lone Star quilt was made circa 1850 by an unknown member of Worcester's Kriebel and Rothenberger families.

Signature quilts were sometimes made to commemorate an event, such as a wedding. Each block had a space for a family member or friend to sign or embroider their name. Today these quilts are treasured family heirlooms.



This signature quilt, made in the early 1840s in Bucks County, consists of 49 Ohio Star blocks, each with a signature written, stamped, or embroidered in the center.

War in Worcester Exhibit

For our fall program, we introduced our newest exhibit, "War in Worcester." The exhibit grew out of the board's desire to honor Worcester's war veterans, and to explore how various wars, from the Revolution to World War II, affected the home front in Worcester.

This exhibit had been on our "to do" list for several years when we were approached by Anusha Sindia, who was enthusiastic about doing her Girl Scout Silver Award project with the Society. With help from her parents and fellow Girl Scouts of Troop 7271, the exhibit came together. In November, we unveiled the exhibit with a program that focused on the home front during wartime.

The Revolutionary War touched close to home in the fall of 1777, when General Washington and his army were encamped in Worcester during the Battle of Germantown. Residents were drawn into the conflict, whether they were loyalists, rebels, pacifists, or indifferent to the war. The Continental Army requisitioned food for the troops, along with horses, oxen to pull the artillery and supply wagons, grain, hay, and guns. Farmers worried they would not have enough food left to feed their own families. Some refused to harvest their grain, because standing crops were not as useful to the soldiers. However, the British Army was an even greater threat — they simply took what they needed and burned the rest.


Many Worcester residents were opposed to fighting on religious grounds, but in 1777 Pennsylvania instituted compulsory military service for 60 days each year for most free men between ages 18 and 53. For a fee, a man could hire a substitute to serve his term of service, and many did so.

Pennsylvania also enacted a "nonresistant's levy," which could be paid by religious objectors in lieu of military service. Questions of whether

Keeping Worcester's History Alive

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to serve, whether to sell supplies to the Continental Army, and whether to take the oath of allegiance to the new government were debated in homes and meeting houses across southeastern Pennsylvania. Those who refused to fight or take the oath of allegiance on religious grounds — including Quakers, Mennonites, Schwenkfelders, and German Baptists — could be accused of being British sympathizers or even traitors.

The exhibit also includes copies of a draft notice from the Civil War, and a miniature sewing kit made by Amanda Jane Coffman for her son Ernest when he served in the Spanish-American War in 1898.

The entire township once again became involved in war during World War I. Residents volunteered to serve on the Liberty Bond Committee, which sold \$47,000 worth of liberty bonds to help fund the war. The Society's collection of war bond pledge cards shows that over 250 residents pledged anywhere from \$3 to \$30, which could be paid all at once or in installments of \$1 each month. A monument to the 35 Worcester residents who served in WWI was erected in front of the high school and now stands in Heebner Park.

The World War II portion of the exhibit features a ration book with coupons, as well as a poster from the federal government warning people not to talk about troop movements because "loose lips sink ships"!

During the program, board member Dave Dambly shared many of the posters he had collected as a teenager during World War II. They conveyed messages that the government wanted everyone to hear, including the importance of keeping up production and buying war bonds to support the troops. Halle Gregory, daughter of board member Lisa Gregory, baked a "war cake" for all to sample. This cake was popular during the war because it used less butter and sugar, and no eggs or chocolate, all of which were rationed during the war.

Board member Leslie Griffin has prepared two binders of information about Worcester's war veterans. This information is available in our library to assist those doing genealogy research.

Girl Scout Anusha Sindia organized and built the War in Worcester exhibit to earn her Silver Award. Artist Bill Bourne designed and printed the panels.



Thank You to Our 2017 Donors!

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

Board member **Karen Simeone** donated several iron trivets made by Worcester's 20th-century artist/blacksmith, Harry Houpt.

Linda Botz donated a "walking" spinning wheel that enhances our flax exhibit.

Terry Bookheimer donated schoolbooks, teaching notes, and a bound set of teachers' monthly reports that belonged to an ancestor who taught in one of Worcester's one-room schools.

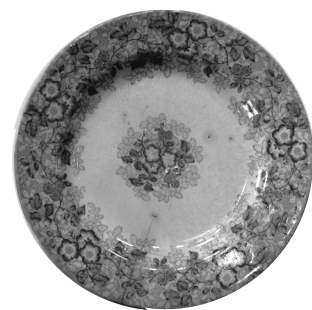
George Bresnick located the Society on the internet after finding two arithmetic workbooks from the Rittenhouse family which were used in the Methacton Mennonite and Quarry Hall one-room schoolhouses in 1837 and 1865. He generously donated these, along with an 1860 arithmetic textbook, on behalf of the H. Stanley Bresnick Foundation.

Gary Fuess, who has been very helpful in interpreting our farming exhibits, donated a collection of kitchen tools used by his grandmother.

Jerry Potter donated a collection of carpenter's planes used by local builder Dick Schafer.

Glenn Brown donated several hand-loomed linen sacks and tickings that were found in the attic of the Nelson Slough home.

Maureen Rogers donated two pieces of German-made porcelain china, a pair of porcelain dolls, and several hand-sewn and hand-embroidered pieces from the Meschter, Bean, and Anders families.



This circa-1840s porcelain plate might have been displayed in the family's china cupboard.

Join us for these events in 2018!

VISIT THE MUSEUM AT FARMERS' UNION HALL 2011 Valley Forge Rd, Saturdays 9 to noon, starting **Apr 7**.

SPRING PROGRAM Visit our website in the spring for the date and topic. Farmers' Union Hall. Free to members; light refreshments will be served.

WHS ANNUAL ANTIQUE & COLLECTIBLES MARKET
Saturday, May 5, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., Heyser Field & Worcester Township Community Hall, Fairview Village. For early reservations and vendor info, visit our website or call 610-613-3878.

Worcester Class of 1953, 1958, 1963, 1968, 1973, 1978, 1983, 1988...

If you have a **class reunion** coming up, why not include a visit to Farmers' Union Hall as part of your day? Let us know the date and time, and we will arrange a guided tour of the museum. You will be amazed at how wonderful the old place looks!

We have many class photos in our collection, from the late 1800s through the 1980s. Visitors are welcome to look through them any time.

Memorial Funds

Recently WHS has been the recipient of several memorial funds established by the families of long-time volunteers and board members of the Society. We deeply appreciate the generosity of these families in designating the Society as the recipient of memorial funds in honor of their loved ones.

The Board of Directors uses these funds for an exhibit or project that was of particular significance to the person being remembered. Exhibits that have been created with these funds include the map display in the library, the one-room schoolhouse exhibit, and the Worcester school photo collection.

Visit Our New Website!

WHS's website was completely redesigned in 2017 to provide even more information. New features include dedicated pages for family photos and one-room school/Worcester School class photos, and an updated page of cemetery records.

Veterans buried in Worcester are recognized on our War Veterans page, and the Reminiscences page include recollections from several residents about growing up in Worcester.

Check out the "Did You Know" page under Local History for fascinating news clips of life over 100 years ago in Worcester. If you recognize any of the unidentified people on the "Who Are They?" page, please let us know so we can put names to faces.

The new format helps us keep you up to date with Society events and puts local history at your fingertips.

Many thanks to board members John Gower, who spent many hours creating the site, and Leslie Griffin, who is constantly adding more content.

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WHS Antique & Collectibles Market
Saturday, May 5, 2018, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.
**Worcester Township Community Hall &
Heyser Field, Fairview Village**

WHS Antique & Collectibles Market

Last year, the Society returned to our roots with the Antique and Collectibles Market you remember from years ago. The focus was on bringing in better, vetted antique dealers. We will do the same in 2018, bringing even more antique dealers together in one place for your shopping enjoyment.

Join us for lunch and enjoy old-fashioned barbecue and hot dogs under the tent. As in years past, we will have home-made pies, fresh rhubarb, and baked items for sale.

Half spaces are available for nonprofits and fundraisers. For vendor information and early reservations, please call **610-613-3878**.

Our Members Are VIPs!

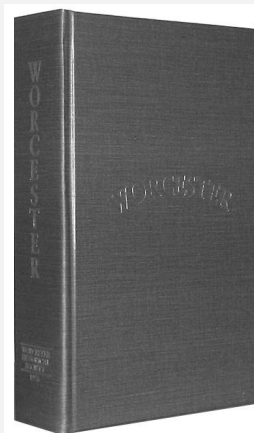
You, our members, are the Society's most important people. Without you, we would not be able to open our museum to the public, or design and build the new exhibits that are such a great attraction in our museum and library.

We want you as a member, so we have some membership gifts for you —

♦ With a **Sustaining Membership** (\$75), visit the museum to pick up a copy of *A History of Worcester Township*, the definitive work on the inns, schools, mills, churches, cemeteries, villages, and historic homes of Worcester.

♦ With a **Lifetime Membership** (\$500), visit the museum to pick up a numbered print of Bill Bourne's iconic painting of Fairview Village at the turn of the 19th century.

Did you know that Worcester had seven one room school houses until 1912 -- and all of them are still in use? Find out where they are located, which ones burned and were rebuilt, and what they looked like over 100 years ago. You'll find that, and so much more, in *A History of Worcester Township*!



What's on Track for 2018?

You might have heard stories of the “Wogglebug,” the trolley that used to run through Worcester to Skippack, and ultimately to Harleysville. From 1907 to 1925, the trolley brought convenient passenger and freight service to these rural agricultural communities. Traces of the Wogglebug’s route can still be seen along Valley Forge Road and Skippack Pike.

The Society proposes to build an HO-scale model of a section of the trolley’s route in Worcester, to show how the trolley fit into our early 20th century landscape of villages and farms.

In Memoriam

On July 23, the Charter Oak, which had stood on the corner of the Methacton Mennonite cemetery for over 360 years, lost a large limb. The next day, as members of WHS and the church met beneath the tree to discuss whether it could survive, the trunk broke apart and the limbs dropped to the ground with an earth-shattering thud.



Commemorative mugs, as well as acorns turned from the oak’s wood, can be purchased from the church and at Farmers’ Union Hall when the museum is open.

Thank you to our 2017 Business Sponsors!

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To be a Business Sponsor in 2018, contact us at info@worcesterhistorical.org or 610-316-7287.

Wish List

- Wooden 19th-century ice box for the kitchen exhibit
- Children’s shoes, 19th & early 20th century
- Men’s and women’s shoes, 19th & early 20th century
- Pencil boxes and school lunch pails
- Life-size child or baby dolls, in good condition

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