

Worcester Historical Society

2019 Membership Newsletter

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Worcester's Wogglebug Rides Again!

The museum's newest exhibit is an HO-scale model of Worcester's early-20th-century trolley. From 1907 to 1923, an electric trolley nicknamed the "Wogglebug" ran through Worcester along Valley Forge Road and Skippack Pike, from Norristown to Harleysville. Last fall the Society unveiled a scale model of the trolley's route through Center Point village, complete with homes, businesses, and the 1912 Worcester school.

Over 100 years ago, the Montgomery Rapid Transit Company provided much-needed passenger and freight service to the rural communities outside Norristown and Lansdale, including Skippack and Worcester. The trolley line between Trooper and Center Point was opened in 1907 and extended to Skippack in 1908.

Although we no longer have residents who remember the trolley, the Wogglebug still makes its presence known in Worcester. If you live along its route, you might find a few track spikes buried in your yard. The passenger waiting station at the Wentz Church Road trolley stop is now part of a storage shed at Wentz's Church.

Why was the trolley so important to rural communities? By the turn of the 20th century, people were relying on one-lane country roads to travel between farms and towns. Farmers needed to transport their products to local customers. The general stores in each rural village needed a reliable way to receive stock. Even the U.S. mail depended on the state of the roads, which were often a mess of mud and ruts. Cattle dealers drove their stock along the roads, churning up even more mud.

Townships tried to keep the roads repaired with crushed stone from local quarries, but it was quickly ground into the mud or washed away in heavy rains. Snow just made everything worse.



Waiting for the trolley in Center Point, circa 1910. Skippack Pike is just a dirt road to the right of the tracks. Note the milk cans waiting to be loaded onto the trolley's freight car.



Here is the same scene in the trolley exhibit.

Keeping Worcester's History Alive

Worcester Historical Society P.O. Box 112 Worcester, PA 19490

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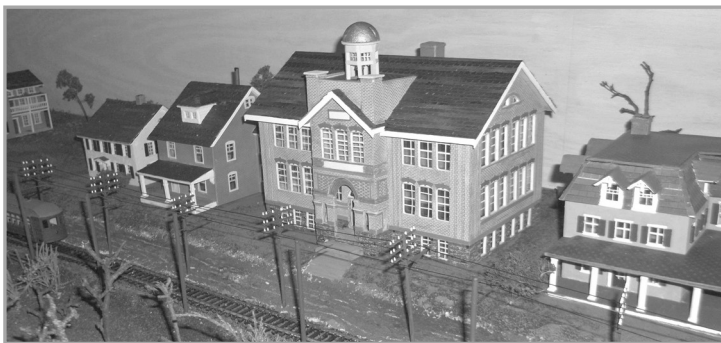


Larger towns like Norristown already had successful electric trolley service. Investors saw profit in extending these lines to the countryside to connect farming communities with neighboring towns.

State law required the trolley company to get written permission from every property owner along the line before construction could start. If property owners refused permission for the trolley to cross in front of or behind their house, the company went to the owner on the other side of the road. This meant the trolley route crossed the road frequently.

The trolley carried freight as well as passengers. Sacks of mail, feed, and everything to be found on the shelves of a general store made the journey to Worcester, Skippack, and ultimately Lederach. Eggs, butter, meat, and produce from the farms in these communities made the return trip to be sold to customers in town.

If you missed this exhibit's debut in November, plan now to stop by when the museum opens in April!

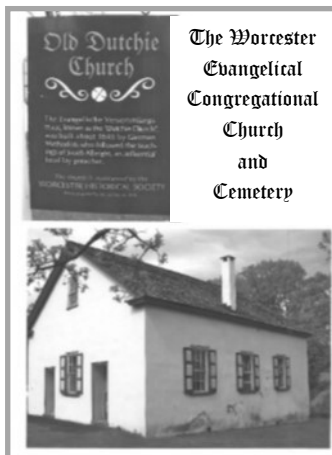


The Worcester school, demolished in the 1980s, is a highlight of the exhibit. The historic homes on either side of the school are still standing today.

Dutchie Church Cemetery Inventory

The Society would like to thank Janet and Ray Vesey for compiling a complete record of the historic cemetery at the German Evangelical ("Dutchie") Church. The Veseys prepared photographs and documentation of all the burials in the cemetery, including an updated spreadsheet that is posted on the Society's website, worcesterhistorical.org.

Photographs of the grave-stones are available on findagrave.com. A notebook containing the Veseys' research is available for visitors' use in the Society's library.



2018 Museum Donations

In 2018 the Society was fortunate to receive many wonderful donations to expand our interpretation of life during Worcester's earlier days.

Martha Berger donated a stoneware vase that was found in a cistern on the Mill Road farm where her mother was raised.

Wayne Brunt donated a wooden case of fish hooks, which he bought at Allebach's store as a boy

Art Bustard donated a wooden ruler inscribed "Sunny Ayre Farms, Worcester, Pa."



Board member **Dave Dambly** donated a WWII poster and a ration book from his personal collection.

Alexander Hall donated a Servo Engineer's manual used at the Transcoil Company, which was located on North Trooper Road in the 1950s to 1970s.

Ellis Kratz donated a straw fork and two hand-forged iron chains made by Lansdale blacksmith Edward Schreppel.

Nancy Markle donated a wooden school desk from the Methacton school district and several iron trivets made by Worcester blacksmith Harry Houpt.

Board member **Pat McDonnell** donated two hand-loomed linen towels from the Heebner family.

The Norrington Questers donated a pair of child's shoes for the costumed mannequins in our one-room schoolhouse display.

Ed Zeigler donated a painted wooden pencil box and pens belonging to a student at the Metz one-room school located on Skippack Pike near Cedars village.

Join us for these events in 2019!

VISIT THE MUSEUM AT FARMERS UNION HALL 2011 Valley Forge Rd, Saturdays 9 to noon, starting **Apr 6**.

SPRING PROGRAM Visit our website in the spring for the date and topic. Farmers Union Hall, 2011 Valley Forge Road.

WHS ANNUAL ANTIQUE & COLLECTIBLES MARKET
Saturday, May 4, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., Heyser Field & Worcester Township Community Hall, Fairview Village. For early reservations and vendor info, visit worcesterhistorical.org or call 610-613-3878.

Worcester Classes of 1954, 1959, 1964, 1969, 1974, 1979, 1984, 1989...

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

From time to time WHS is 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, the Worcester school photo collection, and the trolley exhibit.

In 2018 we wished **founding member Bill Bourne** well as he retired from the Society's board to spend more time doing what he loves — art! Bill and his wife Ginny live at Meadowood, where Bill is constantly busy drawing cartoons for the monthly newsletter and working on new commissions for fellow Meadowood residents. We thank Bill for over 40 years of dedicated service on the Society's board and in our museum.

Dutchie Church News

If you have noticed the church looking nicer recently as you drive by on Valley Forge Road, we have two Boy Scout Troops to thank. Troop 152 scraped and repainted the shutters on the church for Tom Pacaro's Eagle Scout project. Members of Troop 267 cleared vines and other undergrowth from the cemetery.

The Society is grateful to Troop 152 for their support in maintaining this historic church over the years, including repairing and repainting the cemetery fence for Greg Steuer's Eagle Scout project in 2009, and painting the interior of the church for Mike Pacaro's Eagle Scout project in 2016.

WHS Antique & Collectibles Market

Saturday, May 4, 2019, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

**Worcester Township Community Hall &
Heyser Field, Fairview Village**

Antique Dealers ~ Music ~ Food

Bake Sale

*Join us for lunch under the tent and
take home a fresh-baked pie!*

Half spaces are available for nonprofits and fundraisers.

For vendor information and early reservations,
please call **610-613-3878**.

Last fall, board member and librarian **Leslie Griffin** was recognized for her dedication to local history, receiving the Ella Aderman Acorn Award for Preservation of Montgomery County History from the Montgomery County Historical Society.

Our Members Are VIPs!

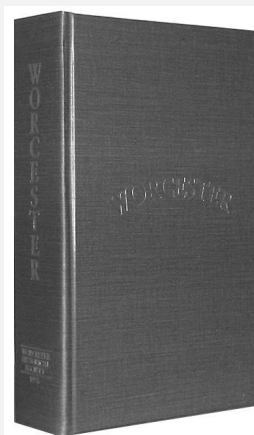
You, our members, are the Society's most important people. Without you, we would not be able to open our museum to the public, or design and build the new exhibits that are such a great attraction in our museum and library.

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*!



Thanks for Joining Us at Our Holiday Open House!

It was great to see so many members and interested residents at our first Holiday Open House at Farmers Union Hall. We thank Bustard's Christmas Trees for the donation of a lovely fir tree. Greens, vintage holiday decorations, and home-made pies were provided by our board members. Mark your calendars now to join us on the first Saturday in December 2019!



Wish List

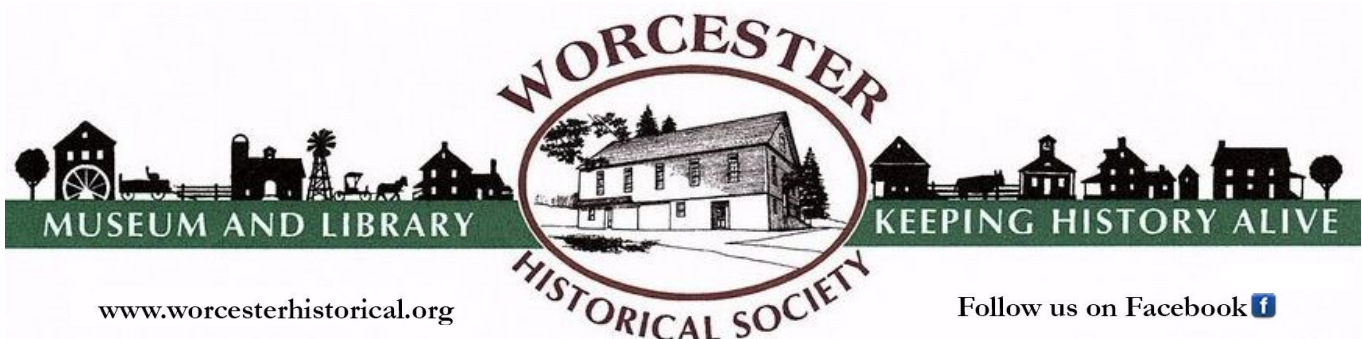
- Wooden 19th-century ice box for the kitchen exhibit
- Children's shoes, 19th & early 20th century
- Men's and women's shoes, 19th & early 20th century
- School lunch pail
- Life-size child or baby dolls, in good condition

Thank you to our 2018 Business Sponsors!

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To be a Business Sponsor in 2019, contact us at
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WORCESTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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