



Archives

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WILKINSBURG HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER
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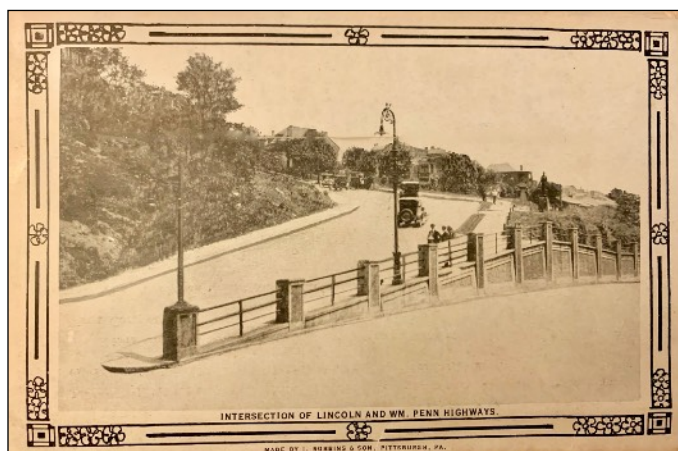
Save the date! Saturday, July 24, 2021 at 10:00 AM

This once-in-your-lifetime occasion will be the grand celebration of Wilkinsburg's beautiful new bronze Abraham Lincoln statue. This will be held at the monument site at the intersection of Penn Avenue and Ardmore Blvd. (Lincoln Highway) in Wilkinsburg. A special dedication program will be held, lasting about an hour or so.

In partnership with the Wilkinsburg Borough Council, the Wilkinsburg Historical Society is planning for a memorable event. The schedule will be similar to the original 1916 program when the first Abraham Lincoln statue was unveiled. The Lincoln program will include a parade from Princeton Boulevard down to the new monument site, Invocation by a Wilkinsburg minister, National Anthem, Unveiling of the statue and its bronze plaque, Presentation of the statue to the President of Wilkinsburg Council, partial reading of the Emancipation Proclamation, and a special keynote message from one of America's foremost Lincoln experts, David Wiegers. The emcee will again be WTAE announcer/anchor Andrew Stockey who is a Wilkinsburg favorite. Free parking will be available by Graham Field with shuttle service down Penn Avenue hill to the statue site.

This is a COMMUNITY event that EVERYONE is invited to. The statue, granite pedestal and bronze plaque are gifts to the people of Wilkinsburg from hundreds of generous donors. Please come and welcome Abraham Lincoln back to his traditional spot on the crossroads. There is lots of standing room, limited seating, so bring a folding chair if you have one. More details will be in the July, 2021 issue of the Archives.

Thank you Wilkinsburg for this beautiful gift! Congratulations to all!



This 1920s postcard shows the noted crossroads of the Lincoln Highway and the William Penn Highway. The concrete retaining wall was built about 1913 when the Lincoln Highway was initially opened. Known locally as "the Ardmore" the wall was shortened by five segments many decades ago to enable Ross Avenue travelers to continue up the hill onto Penn Avenue. The 1916 Lincoln statue is seen standing at the right side in this view.

Wilkinsburg's first statue of Abraham Lincoln was unveiled 105 years ago this week.



The date was June 9, 1916 when Wilkinsburg celebrated all over the Borough. The people of Wilkinsburg were jubilant due to the completion of important Borough improvements. For three years the residents and shopkeepers endured mud and inconvenience while the five dangerous grade crossings of the Pennsylvania railroad through Wilkinsburg were eliminated. The deadly crossings were eradicated by raising the railroad tracks and lowering the street levels near the railroad tracks. The beautiful new PRR Train station was officially open and celebrated June 10, 1916.

After three years of road construction, Wilkinsburg citizens were ready to recognize that their Borough was one of Western Pennsylvania's towns that the newly organized (in 1913) Lincoln Highway went through. It was a huge benefit to any town when the Lincoln Highway route was nearby. For the automobile industry, the new coast-to-coast highway meant that more people would buy an automobile and plan to travel further from home. Restaurants, "tourist homes", motels, gasoline stations, auto repair shops, all were just about guaranteed to be successful business ventures when located on or near the original alignment of the Lincoln Highway.

This image shows the June 9, 1916 crowd ready for the unveiling of the Lincoln Statue at the intersection of the Lincoln Highway and the William Penn Highway. Lincoln is draped in an American flag, (a practice that is no longer acceptable). The retaining wall was just a few years old at the time. Now known as the Ardmore Wall Park, it has been completely restored with a new railing, topped with a wide sidewalk, and several thousand small shrubs. It is not known who the photographer was who captured this image. This photograph is in the collection of the Heinz History Center.

Wilkinsburg's first Public School was originally named First Ward School.



This image shows Wilkinsburg's only public school, First Ward School, built on Wallace Avenue in 1882. It was re-named Horner School after Squire James Horner. James Horner lived at the intersection of Main Street, later re-named Penn Avenue and Horner Lane. (Horner Lane was later renamed Wood Street.) The large quadruple lot was land donated by benefactor James Kelly. This beautiful school was destroyed by fire in 1890 after just eight years. A second Horner school was built on the same site. Old-fashioned heating methods often caused disastrous fires, and in 1916 the second Horner School also burned down. A third Horner School was constructed at the same location. That school building is now known as Hosanna House, a community center.



This 1886 map shows the location of Wilkinsburg's public school between Wallace Avenue and North Avenue. (green space on the map). In the next block to the west shows the second property was owned by the Methodist Episcopal Church. This property was later sold to the Wilkinsburg Baptist Church when the Methodist congregation purchased land on South Avenue to build a large stone church. The three homes next to the church lot were torn down in 1910 when the Wilkinsburg School Board purchased them for the purpose of building Wilkinsburg's first dedicated High School.

WPSD, Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf, educating youth since 1869.



WPSD Facebook posted this lovely photo and caption of the graduating class of 2021. "Ten WPSD seniors walked the halls of the School for the last time June 10, 2021. The graduates were dressed in their caps and gowns, being cheered on by their friends and peers who lined the halls to high-five them and congratulate them on this important milestone. We are so proud of our seniors, their accomplishments and the people they have become. We wish them every success! We will miss this wonderful group of students! Best of luck as you head out into the world!"



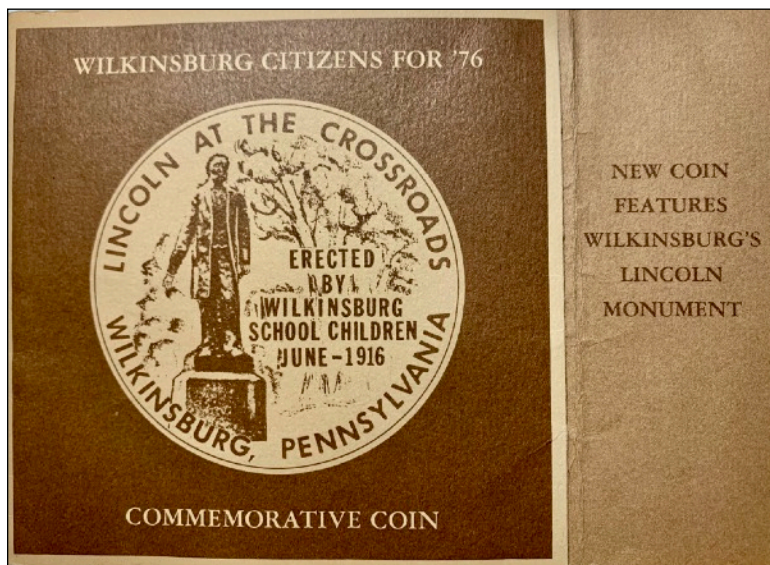
When entering the main columned entrance of WPSD at 300 East Swissvale Avenue in Edgewood, the visitor will see this large bronze plaque on the wall in the entrance hall. This is in remembrance to Wilkinsburg's own James Kelly, the benefactor who provided the land for the WPSD campus. Founded in 1869, the WPSD was the first day school for the deaf in the United States. The goal of the school was to provide opportunities for deaf children through education. The school grew from eight students on that first day in 1869 to the highest enrollment of over 500 students in the 1960s. WPSD moved to the current location on Swissvale Avenue in 1884. It now has a beautiful twenty acre campus with twenty-one buildings to serve all the needs of students and staff.

Woodlawn Cemetery - Flags are placed on Veteran's graves every Memorial Day.



Woodlawn Cemetery, 1460 Penn Avenue in Wilkinsburg is the final resting place for thousands of people with a connection to Wilkinsburg. Many of these families were the early founders of the Borough. Woodlawn Cemetery was officially established in February, 1903, although burials had been happening for at least a quarter century prior to incorporation. One large section towards the eastern part of the cemetery is reserved for Veterans.

Every year Veterans graves are marked with an American flag to commemorate their service to the United States and are a visual reminder that Veterans are buried there. Often placed by American Legion or Veterans of Foreign Wars members, the flags honor each person with the US symbol of patriotic sacrifice.



The Lincoln monument was purchased in 1916 with pennies contributed by the School children of Wilkinsburg and was erected at the intersection of Routes 22 and 30 in Wilkinsburg. The event, known as the Grade Crossing Elimination, marked the completion of the elevation of the railroad tracks which cut through the Business District of the Community. "Lincoln at the Crossroads" coins were sold sixty years later, in 1976, as part of a Bicentennial project of the Wilkinsburg Citizens for '76.



Don't miss out on **The Wilkinsburg Sun**, a free monthly community newsletter published by the volunteer Wilkinsburg Community Newsletter Board, with the support of the Wilkinsburg Borough, the Wilkinsburg School District, the Wilkinsburg Chamber of Commerce and the Wilkinsburg Community Development Corporation.

The Sun accepts submitted articles provided they are related to Wilkinsburg and are civic-minded.

<https://wilkinsburgsun.wordpress.com>

Sign up to receive The Sun by email at eeurl.com/v0iBP and friend The Sun on Facebook.

Wilkinsburg Historical Society has a website, to share more information about the history of Wilkinsburg. wilkinsburghistory.wordpress.com

Mailing address: **Wilkinsburg Historical Society, P.O. Box 17252, Pittsburgh, PA 15235**

The "Archives" Historical Society newsletter is published monthly, March through November.

Wilkinsburg Historical Society yearly dues for the Wilkinsburg Historical Society are:

\$20.00 INDIVIDUAL Member, \$35.00 FAMILY Membership

\$10.00 STUDENT or ASSOCIATE Members (for out of towners who usually can't attend meetings) Please keep your membership dues up to date. Membership dues and additional donations are very important to our efforts to preserve Wilkinsburg's history and assist with preservation and restoration efforts all over the Borough.

Wilkinsburg Historical Society - Membership application
Help promote the valuable history of Wilkinsburg.

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____

E-mail address _____

() \$20 Individual membership

() \$35 Family membership

() \$10 Student or associate membership

() \$_____ Additional donation

Please make check payable to: **Wilkinsburg Historical Society**
PO Box 17252, Pittsburgh, PA 15235

Anytime is a good time to pay your dues for the Wilkinsburg Historical Society. We have many preservation projects going on, plus the cost of sending out the Archives and providing displays for Wilkinsburg events. Many thanks to those of you who have already sent in your membership dues. Please use the address on the form, our PO box.