



Archives

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Semple Public School (1904-1974)



The first image, taken in 1966 shows the Semple Public School, in Wilkinsburg's First Ward. The school was built in 1904 as Wilkinsburg's population was increasing rapidly. The school was named for a local physician, Dr. John Semple who had a medical office on Penn Avenue for over fifty years. The gray warehouse building in the 2025 right image was built farther up Swissvale Avenue on the same lot where the school had been, after Semple School was torn down.

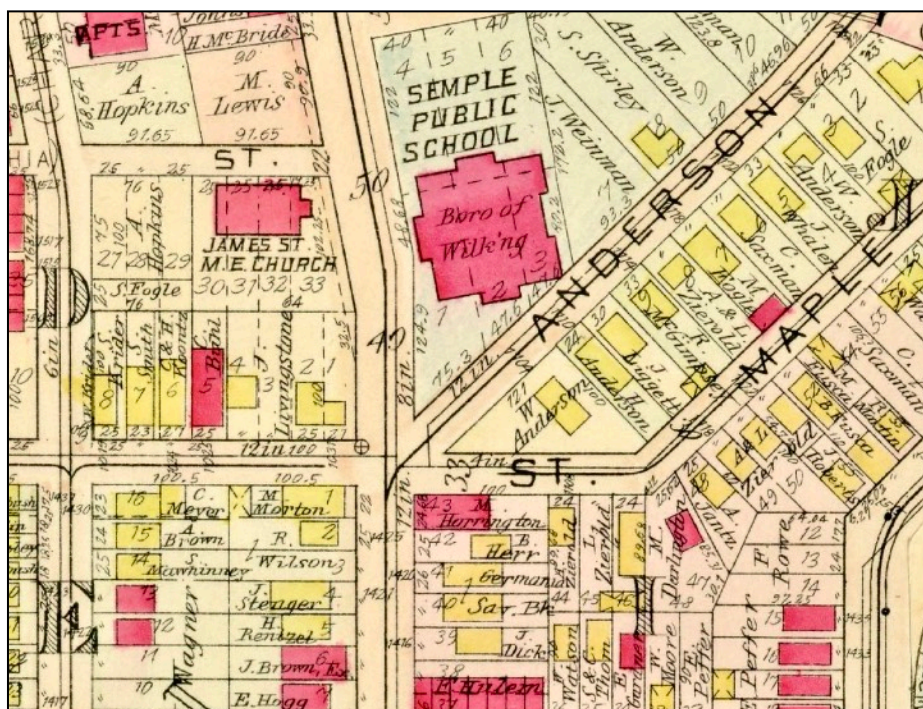
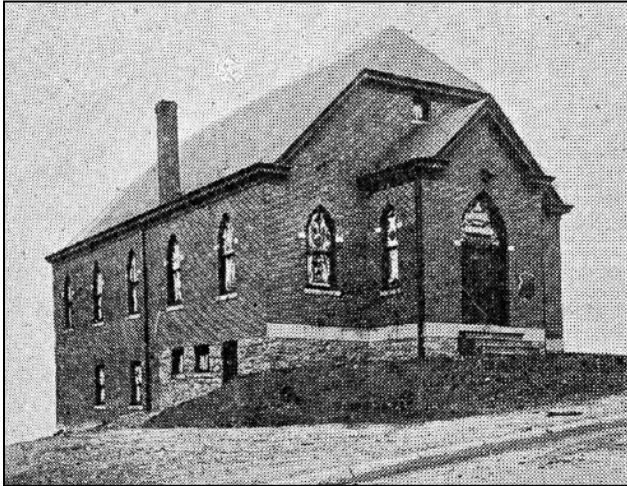


Plate 3 of a Wilkinsburg 1915 Hopkins Map (from historicpgh.org) shows the location of the Semple Public School. Built in 1904, it was located at the intersection of Swissvale Ave. and Anderson St. Anderson Street was later renamed Laketon Road. The James St, Methodist Church became Mt. Calvary Baptist Church in 1965 and has remained so ever since.

In 1904 both Semple Public School and James Street Methodist Church were built.



1912 view of James Street Methodist Church

By 1904, South Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church became so overcrowded that two new churches were formed, the James Street Methodist Episcopal Church and the Ross Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church. The James Street Church began when the South Avenue Methodist members organized a Sunday School at the top of Maplewood Avenue near Grand Avenue, in what was the former Firemen's Hose House. The first Sunday School service took place on July 3, 1904. The attendance increased as Sunday School continued into the fall.



This church building was chartered at 1036 Penn Avenue in 1923. By 1949 Rev. S.D. Bonaparte was called by the church to serve. Under his leadership many projects were accomplished and the membership steadily grew. The Mount Calvary congregation outgrew the space, so in 1965 when the nearby James Street Methodist church became available to purchase, Mt. Calvary eagerly signed the agreement. This Penn Avenue building is now New Testament Missionary Baptist Church.



This image was captured by photographer Charles "Teenie" Harris on December, 1965 as the Mount Calvary pastors and congregation marched up Swissvale Avenue to their new church. The building in view is the former Semple Public School which was razed in 1974. The participants included Rev. Sam McGill, pastor of the St. Mark AME Church on nearby Montier Street. Teenie Harris personally presented this image to Rev. Sam McGill.

Westinghouse time capsules from 1938 & 1965 were featured at 1964-65 NY World's Fair.



It has been sixty years since the 1964-65 New York World's Fair in Queens, NY was held. Covering 646 acres the theme for the fair was "Peace through Understanding". There were 139 pavilions showcasing international arts, music, crafts, dance and food. Over eighty nations participated, thirty-five states and 1400 organizations and companies.

One of the featured exhibits included the **Westinghouse Time Capsules** provided by the Westinghouse Electric Corporation. This included a model of the 1938 Time Capsule and a new one, the 1965 Time Capsule II. The capsules are 90 inches long and about 9 inches in diameter. Each contained contemporary items and are filled with items representing life in the 20th century. It is hoped that these two Time Capsules will be dug up in the seventh millenium, in the year 6900, nearly 4900 years after they were buried.

These Westinghouse Time Capsules were buried fifty feet deep in the Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, the site of the New York World's Fairs. The 1965 capsule is buried about ten feet north from where the 1938 one is buried.

To be sure that people who live in the year 6900 will know about the time capsules, the Westinghouse organizers gave record books to thousands of libraries and museums worldwide.

Duplicates of the contents are held at the Heinz History Center. The 1938 Capsule I holds common articles, textiles, microfilm with manuscripts, photo images and a large variety of seeds, The 1965 Time Capsule II focused on five main categories: common articles, atomic energy, scientific developments, space and "other". To mark the location of the buried time capsules, a seven-ton round granite monument was placed after the 1965 Fair was over. The inscription on it reads: "The time capsules deposited September 23, 1938 and October 16, 1965 by the Westinghouse Electric Corporation as a record of twentieth century civilization, to endure for 5,000 years."

Beginning in 1952, mid-September meant the annual **Marching Band Festival** at **Graham Field** sponsored by the **Kiwanis Foundation of Wilkinsburg**.



In 1959 Wilkinsburg marching band Tigers performed under the lights at Graham Field. The band festival always started with the combined bands playing the National Anthem. At the conclusion the six attending bands played a finale "God of our Fathers" and the bands were presented with plaques.

Boy Scout Troop 59 from Turner School helped with the refreshment stands. The Usher Squad of Wilkinsburg High School provided ushers and usherettes.



The annual Tri-state Marching Band Festival was sponsored by the Kiwanis Foundation of Wilkinsburg. Always held at Graham Field this popular event featured six outstanding high school bands from around western Pennsylvania. Some of the participating bands were: Aliquippa, North Allegheny, McKeesport, Avonworth, Bethel Park, and Pine Richland.

Tickets were \$1.00 each, and reserved seats could be purchased for \$1.50. Several of the businesses in Wilkinsburg helped by being official outlets for obtaining tickets.

The Festival was always held in the middle of September. In early years it was held in the evening at 8:00. Wilkinsburg School District had lights installed in 1948 so Graham Field was brightly lit. By the 1970s the time was changed to Saturday or Sunday afternoon. Wilkinsburg businesses supported this annual festival by buying advertisements in the program. Ads were available in full page, 1/2 page, 1/4 page and 1/8 page sizes. Patrons could support the festival by paying \$5.00 to have their name listed in the program.



Kiwanis International was founded in 1915 as service organization for businessmen to network, socialize and channel their philanthropic spirit. Kiwanis Mission is to be a global organization of volunteers dedicated to improving the world one child and one community at a time.

The Kiwanis Vision is to be a positive influence in communities worldwide - so that one day, all children will wake up in communities that believe in them, nurture them and provide the support they need to thrive.

The Wilkinsburg Kiwanis Club was chartered December 7, 1927 with an organizational meeting in the newly opened Penn-Lincoln Hotel. For nearly fifty years the weekly Kiwanis meetings were Thursday 12:15 in the Penn-Lincoln Hotel.

Underprivileged child work was the main object of the early Wilkinsburg Kiwanis. Most of the work had been for eyeglasses, tonsillectomy operations, limb braces and eye operations. Additionally, the Wilkinsburg Kiwanis was active in Boy Scout work. In 1935 they paid for and constructed a Boy Scout hut at Camp Twin Echo.

For ninety-four years the Wilkinsburg Kiwanis Club fulfilled their mission and worked with the children of Wilkinsburg in many ways. In the past few years the Wilkinsburg club has joined with the Homewood, Point Breeze and East Liberty clubs, and most of their activities are now virtual.

The following clipping came from the 1964 Kiwanis-sponsored Marching Band Festival. All of the proceeds from the Band Festival were put back into the community for the benefit of the children of Wilkinsburg.

Kiwanis Foundation of Wilkinsburg

The members of the Kiwanis Foundation of Wilkinsburg take this occasion to thank each one of you in attendance at this, our Twelfth Annual Marching Band Festival, also all the advertisers in this program. As a result of your continued support the past years at these festivals, we are able to carry on our program of service to various groups and individuals in the Wilkinsburg Community.

As in the past, during 1963, the Foundation financed necessary dental work for approximately 85 needy children from Wilkinsburg Public Schools and St. James Roman Catholic School. In addition, shoes were provided for several families, as well as food baskets at various times during the year. A special activity, in December, in cooperation with the Regent Square Theater, was the collection of canned goods at a special show, which was distributed to 14 needy families. Financial contributions were made during the year to the Boys Club of Wilkinsburg, East Borough Boy Scouts, Western Pennsylvania Society for Retarded Children, Wilkinsburg Symphony, United Fund, Allegheny County Society for Crippled Children and Western Pennsylvania School for the Blind.

Through the Student Loan Fund of the Kiwanis Foundation, we were able to grant loans to 5 students from Wilkinsburg this year. Loans are granted on a non-interest basis with repayment within five years after completion of schooling. Each year part of the funds from the band festival is set aside for the Student Loan Fund. This past year contributions to the fund were also received from the Turner Community Service Club and the Wilkinsburg Foundation, to whom we are most grateful.

On the last pages of this program is a list of patrons for this year; listings for which are offered each year at \$5.00 each. Arrangements for listings in the 1965 program can be made by filling out the form below. Remittance may be sent with form or an invoice will be sent to you next September.

Kiwanis Foundation of Wilkinsburg:

c/o Dr. John R. McCune, Secy., 802 Wood St., Pittsburgh, Pa. 15221

Please enter the following as a patron for your 1965 Band Festival at \$5.00:



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:

<http://eepurl.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.

We do not usually publish the Archives during the three Winter months of December, January and February.

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 Please keep your membership dues up to date.

Contributions are needed for "Lights for Lincoln", to get improved lighting for the Lincoln Plaza area. Abraham Lincoln stands in the dark after sun-down. Your donation can help us illuminate this outstanding area overlooking the Lincoln Highway.

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, 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.