

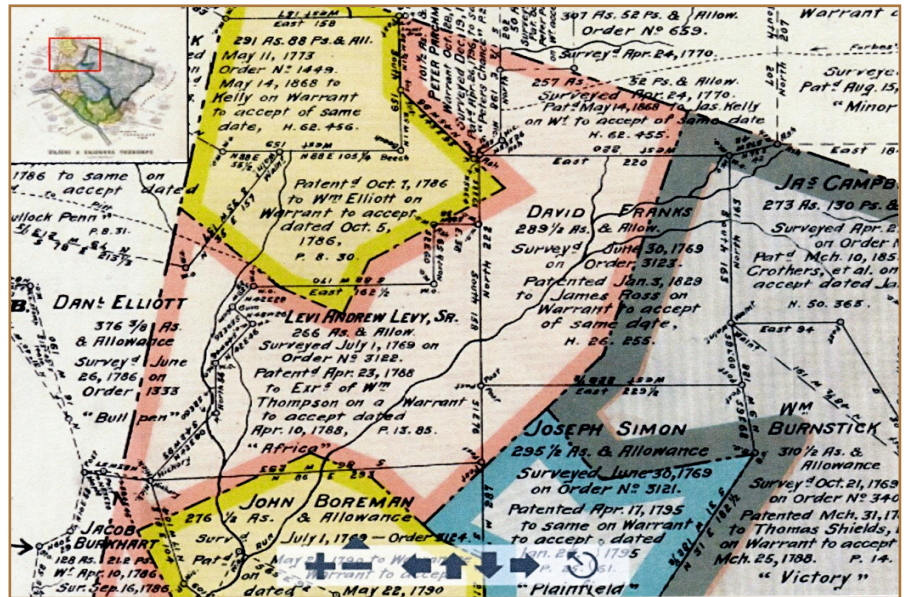


Archives

APRIL
2026

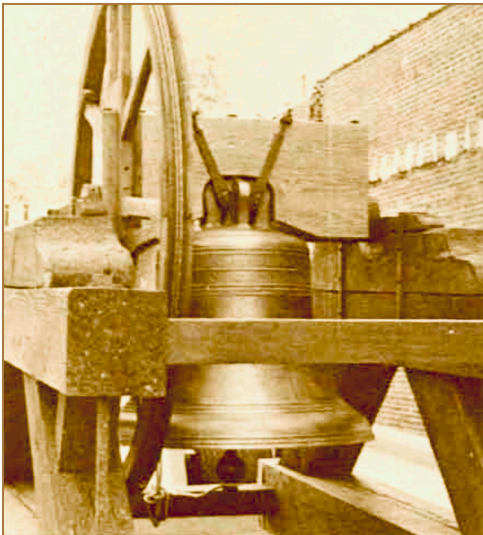
WILKESBURG HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER
VOLUME 32, ISSUE 2

Wilkesburg Citizens for '76 was a community group formed in 1976 for the purpose of creating memorable events to celebrate the Bicentennial of America, the 200th birthday of the United States. That group was patriotic, energetic and creative. They represented the approximately 25,000 residents of the Borough. This issue of the *Archives* features some of the various ways that Wilkesburg recognized America's 200th birthday. Now, fifty years later in 2026 America celebrates 250 years as a nation. Wilkesburg should plan some ways to honor the nation's birthday. Anyone have some ideas or energy to help commemorate the 250th birthday of the United States?



This sepia colored cover was chosen in 1976 to have a commemorative booklet about the 200th birthday of our nation and how Wilkesburg celebrated. Some of the highlights of the 1976 celebration have been selected for this issue of the *Archives* to show readers those activities. Wilkesburg can still plan a few semiquincentennial events to celebrate 250 years now in this year, 2026.

This map, showing the tracts of land which comprise present day Wilkesburg was constructed from the records on file in the Department of Internal Affairs. When the Land Company of the Colony of Pennsylvania opened territory for sale in its western counties, Andrew Levi Levy Sr. was among the early rush of buyers in 1769. He made application for a tract of 266 acres which included present Wilkesburg. He named his tract Africa. Mr. Levy bought his land grant for speculation hoping to reap a neat profit from future land sales. But, the land sales did not come and the years of confusion during the American Revolution gave him no market. So, in 1788, Mr. Levy sold his ownership of the land grant to General William Thompson for 45 pounds and 5 shillings or a little over \$107.



Wilkinsburg had the honor to be the only community outside the city of Pittsburgh to display the replica of the Liberty Bell which was given to the people of the tristate area and which is kept at the Flag Plaza-Scout Center of the Boy Scouts' Allegheny Trails Council in the city. This replica of the original bell was cast by Whitechapel Foundry at London in 1974 and is an exact replica in every detail of the bell ordered by the Pennsylvania Provincial Assembly from the same foundry in 1751. The original bell was the largest brought to America at that time and was designed to be heard 12 miles away when rung. The replica and its mountings, which weigh a ton, are a salute to America's third hundred years.

In 1976 the Citizens for '76 and the Wilkinsburg Chamber of Commerce announced that area residents could see the Liberty Bell on Independence Day without traveling 300 miles to Philadelphia. An exact replica of the Liberty Bell was on display in Wilkinsburg in the Penn Avenue Parklet, now the Harold Young Parklet. The replica bell was cast by the same foundry that cast the original in 1751. The bell belongs to the Allegheny Trails Council of the Boy Scouts of America and is on display at Flag Plaza at 1275 Bedford Avenue in Pittsburgh, PA 15219. It was on display all day from 9 AM to 5 PM. At 12:30 PM WTAE's Paul Long presented "The Bell Speaks" during a formal flag raising ceremony.





This image was taken on July 4, 1976 in Wilkinsburg at the ceremony showcasing the replica Liberty Bell. The bell was on loan from the Boy Scouts at Flag Plaza, and was temporarily placed in the newly created Penn Avenue Parklet. The Revolutionary era man holding the tricorn hat was John Sarver who was Master of Ceremonies. The Bicentennial prayer was offered by Rev. Earl G. Creps Jr. of Calvary Lutheran Church.



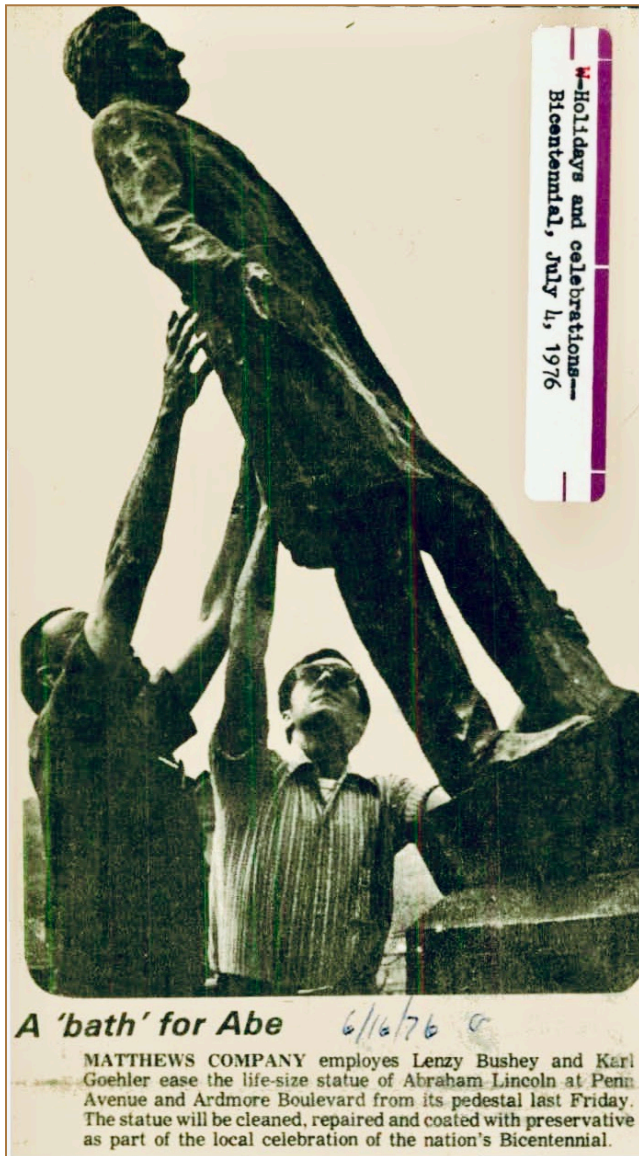
The official ceremonies of Citizens for '76 and the Wilkinsburg Chamber of Commerce were held on July 4, 1976. As pictured in the 1776-1976 commemorative booklet are, left to right, Charles Acheson, executive director of the Chamber of Commerce, John Sarver of the Chamber who served as master of ceremonies (and was dressed in American Revolutionary attire), and J. Gary Lewis, co-chairman of Citizens for '76.



The Wilkinsburg Boys' and Girls' Brigade led the procession to the Penn Avenue parklet (now the Harold Young Parklet) where special observances of the nation's 200th birthday took place. These young people performed for enthusiastic onlookers. The official Bicentennial celebration in the Borough of Wilkinsburg began on July 3, 1976 with the raising of the American and Bicentennial flags.



The Wilkinsburg Citizens For '76 announce the striking of an antique bronze-finished coin prepared to commemorate our town's observance of the Bicentennial of the American Revolution. The sale of the bronze medallions raised funds to help provide lighting for the Abraham Lincoln statue.



The Wilkinsburg's statue of Abraham Lincoln was originally placed at the crossroads of Penn Avenue and the Lincoln Highway (Ardmore Boulevard) in June of 1916. It was purchased in part by contributions from Wilkinsburg school children and erected so that the life-sized sheet copper statue would overlook the Lincoln Highway in Wilkinsburg. The Lincoln Highway is the first practical coast-to-coast highway, and it honors the 16th President of the United States.

By 1976 the Lincoln statue had been in place for sixty years. It had some deterioration from environmental factors and needed to be refurbished. The Matthews Bronze Company in Pittsburgh was chosen to remove the statue to clean it, make repairs and apply a preservative to keep the copper looking good. After Lincoln's makeover the statue was put back on the original pedestal.

(In later years, during the 1980s and 1990s the statue was stolen, buried, cut off at the ankles, and damaged by vandals. Civic groups raised money to have this historic artifact repaired again and reinstalled. Finally, in 2021 Wilkinsburg Historical Society and citizens raised enough funds to retire the original Lincoln statue to Council Chambers and create a new, life-size bronze Abraham Lincoln at the cross-roads of the Lincoln Highway and the William Penn Highway.



The Lincoln Highway Association will host a huge celebration this summer of 2026. This event, the week of June 22-26 in York, PA. celebrates the Lincoln Highway, the first coast-to-coast highway in our nation. The Lincoln Highway National Conference in York, PA. is entitled “Road to Independence” as the celebration includes the 250th birthday of the USA.

This exciting conference features tours to choose from, lectures, videos, music, celebrations. A number of special events are planned for you to select. You can decide on several extra activities to celebrate the nation’s 250th anniversary as well as the Lincoln Highway.

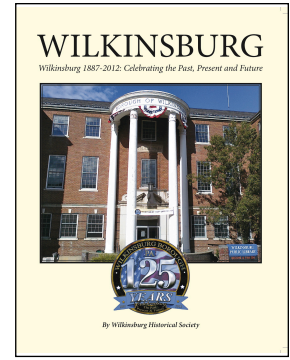
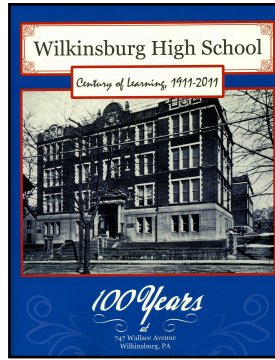
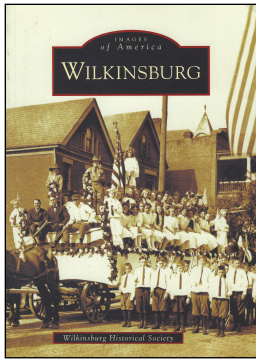
There will be bus tours, walking tours, visits to Gettysburg Battlefield where the July 1-3, 1863 battle took place. special events and presentations about over 250 years of transportation history along the Lincoln Highway. Pennsylvania has a number of historic **Lincoln Highway** places to visit and it’s quite special that the National conference for 2026 is in York, Pennsylvania! There is an extra bus trip on Friday June 26 to Philadelphia to Independence Hall and the Liberty Bell.

To learn more about the conference and tours, pre-register and start making your plans, visit the Lincoln Highway Association website: lincoln250pa.org



<https://lincoln250pa.org>

Scan the QR code to see the entire extensive itinerary, and make your plans to have an amazing time this June at the Lincoln Highway National Conference in York, PA. Some of the side trips are filling up fast! Don’t miss out, scan the QR code today!!



These are the three books that the **Wilkinsburg Historical Society** wrote and published during the past twelve years. They help to promote and preserve the history of Wilkinsburg and raise funds for the various projects of the Society. All three books are still available to purchase from the Society. Another way to support the activities of the Historical Society.

On the far left is ***“Images of America - Wilkinsburg”***, a 128 page soft-bound book printed by the Arcadia Publishing Company. It includes over 220 black and white photos depicting the history of our town from the early land patents in the late 1700s up to the 75th celebration of Wilkinsburg in 1962. The book is available from the Wilkinsburg Historical Society for \$20.00, plus \$3.00 for shipping.

The middle book above is ***“Wilkinsburg High School - Century of Learning 1911-2011”***. This book chronicles the history of the local high school from its early start in the late 1880s, the creation of the magnificent structure in 1910, and each decade since with highlights of the events that were important in the lives of the students and the Wilkinsburg community. For over 100 years the Wilkinsburg High School served the Borough of Wilkinsburg students and this book has several hundred photos showing much of this important history. This *Century of Learning* book is available from the Wilkinsburg Historical Society for \$15.00, plus \$3.00 for shipping.

The book on the far right is ***“Wilkinsburg - 1887-2012, Celebrating the Past, Present and Future”***. This book was produced by the Historical Society in 2012 to recognize the 125th anniversary of Wilkinsburg’s incorporation as a Borough. This soft-bound book has 196 pages and includes chapters on the history of Wilkinsburg, the celebrations from the past, information about Wilkinsburg’s government, and all the events that occurred during the 125th celebration. There are several chapters about the clubs and organizations in Wilkinsburg as well as the churches and worship centers in the Borough. The “future of Wilkinsburg” section recognizes advertisers and sponsors who helped to fund the creation and printing of the book. This book, originally \$15.00, is now available for \$10.00, plus \$3.00 for shipping.

<p>Make check or money order payable to: Wilkinsburg Historical Society Orders can be mailed to: Wilkinsburg Historical Society, P.O.Box 17252, Pittsburgh, PA 15235</p>			
Images of America - Wilkinsburg	(\$20.00 + \$3.00) = \$23.00	Quantity_____	Total _____
Century of Learning 1911-2011	(\$15.00 + \$3.00) = \$18.00	Quantity_____	Total _____
Wilkinsburg 1887-2012	(\$10.00 + \$3.00) = \$13.00	Quantity_____	Total _____
Name_____		Address_____	
City_____	State_____	Zip _____	



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.