



Circa 1794

The Newsletter of Historic Rock Ford

New Project Brings the Hand Mansion Dining Room Table to Life

By Pamela Stoner, Board of Trustees, Rock Ford Foundation

With the opening of the 2022 tour season, Historic Rock Ford staff and volunteers have focused attention on the dining room with a new project designed to help bring to life the skills and labor of many unsung early American cooks and the elaborate meals they prepared for wealthy families like the Hands.

Each month, an array of faux food items, handcrafted of museum safe materials, will be displayed on the Hand family table. The various dishes represented will be recreations of Rock Ford period recipes chosen to reflect the regional and seasonal availability of ingredients, the family's cultural traditions, and their socio-economic status.

Guests may find that foods prepared precisely according to a period recipe and cooked at the hearth can be very surprising. Modern preferences, cooking techniques, and preconceptions can lead us to expect a dish to look or taste a certain way so we rely upon the skills of our modern Rock Ford hearth cooks to prepare actual period recipes in an effort to more authentically recreate foods in faux form for our display.

There are no known records to indicate just who was cooking in the circa 1794-1810 Rock Ford kitchen or whether the cook was free or bound. Very little is also known about the dining practices of the Hand family but primary period sources provide clues. Published cookery books were available in early America but a handwritten household journal belonging to Sarah Yeates has been particularly helpful in determining the types of dishes the Hands may have eaten since Mrs. Yeates was a close relative and peer of the Hand family. The original book is in the collection of Landis Valley Village & Farm Museum and is currently on display in its visitors center.

In addition to recipes, Sarah Yeates wrote-out suggestions for entire menus similar to those included in period cookbooks. Menus were organized by month and accompanied by diagrams showing the well-ordered placement of each dish on the table. Like today, the appearance of food held great importance and, along with instructions on table layout, there were often suggestions about the way food was to be garnished and presented.

Unfortunately, a typical cook in a house like Rock Ford never sat down in the dining room to enjoy the food they prepared. Their creations lasted only as long as the length of one meal with not so much as a picture to record them. Their work was never ending but, thanks to the durability of modern art supplies, our faux versions may survive for years!

Realistic faux foods recreating 18th century dishes such as Lemon Cheesecakes (middle) and Cabbage Pudding (bottom) adorn the dining room table in the Hand Mansion.





2021-22 Membership Appeal

Historic Rock Ford would like to thank the following individuals and organizations who became new members or who renewed their memberships from **November 1, 2021 to May 15, 2022**. This list will be updated in future newsletters.

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In Honor of Our Parents, Children and Grandchildren

Thomas G. Englert

In Honor of David J. Englert and Suzy S. Englert

The Gibson Family

In Memory of John M. Gibson

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Dedicated to Our Granddaughters,
Josephine and Eden

Samuel and Laura Slaymaker
In Memory of Samuel C. Slaymaker, II and
Martha F. Slaymaker

Stephen W. Trapnell
In Memory of Ann Taylor,
Former Rock Ford Manager

Historic Rock Ford Acquires Important New Collection Items

By Samuel C. Slaymaker, Executive Director

Thanks to the generous support of Historic Rock Ford Member and Volunteer Thomas G. Englert, our museum was able to purchase four items at the auction of the William K. du Pont Estate “Important Americana from Rocky Hill” that was held at Sotheby’s in New York on January 22-23, 2022. According to the auction catalog, “Over the course of decades, William K. du Pont assembled a collection that is entirely unique in character and importance, comprising some of the best examples of Americana ever to appear at auction.” The items were selected by our Collections Committee based on both their rarity and their ability to fit well into Historic Rock Ford’s existing collection and its use in interpreting everyday life here during the Hand era:

1. “Very Fine Wrought Iron Cabbage Cutter, probably southeastern PA, dated 1776.” Features etched initials and jumping horse;
2. Two very fine and rare brass inlaid wrought iron strainers, southeastern PA, one dated 1792 and depicting a man with a rifle; and
3. Rare American walnut slide-lid box, probably southeastern PA, filled with period children’s building blocks (approximately 181 pieces). Circa 1800.





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The Rock Ford Foundation is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit tax-exempt corporation incorporated within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania on May 22, 1958.

The Foundation is supported by admissions, gifts, grants, earned income from barn rentals, museum memberships, fundraising events, and bequests.

PHMC grant awarded to Historic Rock Ford

Historic Rock Ford is pleased to announce that it was awarded a General Operating Support Grant in the amount of \$4,000 from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, a state agency funded by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. These funds are used to support educational programs and general museum operations. The PHMC awards General Operating Support grants on a competitive basis to eligible museums and historic sites throughout the Commonwealth on an annual basis.



Special Exhibit opens June 1 in the Snyder Gallery

Long Rifles of the American Revolution: How Lancaster County Craftsmen Helped Win the War opens June 1 in the Snyder Gallery. This special exhibit runs through October 30 and features approximately 35 Revolutionary War-era long rifles accompanied by storyboards, maps, illustrations and other artifacts to place the items in their proper historical context. This exhibit marks the first occasion that these weapons have been brought together in a single exhibition. "Exhibit Only" tickets may be purchased at rockford.yapsody.com. Admission is free to current members of the Rock Ford Foundation. Simply select the date that you would like to visit and choose "Rock Ford Member" as the ticket option. Thank you to our Founding Sponsor, the Richard C. von Hess Foundation, and our Bronze Sponsor, Thomas G. Englert, for their support.



Historic Rock Ford acknowledges and thanks our 2022 Season Sponsors for their generous support:

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