

Dear Rock Ford Foundation Members and friends,

We hope this finds you well. As we are sure you know, Rock Ford has been in the news recently and we want to take the opportunity to fill you in on a few key points that were not fully fleshed out in the articles on line or in the paper. In all cases, our participation in these stories was in response to requests from members of the media to provide statements on various topics related to current events.

First, it is important to understand that we continue to bring the story of General Edward Hand to the visiting public. Whether these visitors are out-of-town tourists, local folks, special interest groups, or school children, our guides are passionate about sharing the history of Edward Hand and of the times in which he lived.

Through the example of this one man, we are provided opportunities to learn and connect with others about Lancaster in the 18th century, the War for Independence, the foundation of our Republic, early medicine, politics, architecture, agriculture, family, and more. Edward Hand also opens the door to the topic of slavery, a tragic part of American history that was not often discussed when Rock Ford opened to the public in 1960.

Hand owned enslaved people throughout his residency in Lancaster. Research that has been ongoing for the last ten years has shed light on these individuals and the institution of slavery in Lancaster County and we have been incorporating this research into our tours and programs ever since. The addition of this information in no way demeans or disparages the positive contributions of Edward Hand. Instead, it allows us to better understand the full man as a flesh and blood human being who embodies all the complexities, paradoxes, and failings of our nation's founding. It also brings to the fore the contributions of an entire population of enslaved individuals who allowed Edward Hand and his contemporaries to succeed in their endeavors and helped to build the United States through their forced labor.

Rock Ford history is not being erased. It is being enhanced by adding more layers to the narrative. It is our job to honestly and thoroughly tell these stories to the best of our ability so that our visitors may draw their own conclusions about their history and how it influences us today.

We will never attempt to minimize Edward Hand's positive contributions nor will we neglect to say that he was a slave owner. We will continue to search for information that will inform us about every aspect of life at Rock Ford and the museum will be its most interesting and meaningful when we can tell about all the people who lived and worked there.

We invite you to reacquaint yourself with Edward Hand and his household by exploring the Rock Ford website. Read the document titled "Completing the Picture: Slavery and Servitude at Early Lancaster County" located under the new tab labeled "Research." You will also find more information about current events including a description of the

re-branding process we are undertaking in anticipation of the opening of the John J. Snyder, Jr. Gallery of Early Lancaster County Decorative Arts which was delayed due to COVID-19 related shutdowns.

These times of upheaval and national disharmony underscore that our past is as relevant today as it has ever been. It is starkly clear that the teaching and understanding of American history are vital to the advancement of our society and to the functioning of our Republic. Even as we move forward, our past shapes our present and our future and is inescapable. As stated by F. Scott Fitzgerald in the closing sentence of *The Great Gatsby*, "So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past."

Thank you for your support of Rock Ford's educational mission. It has never been more important.

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Pamela Stoner".

Pamela Stoner
Board President

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Samuel C. Slaymaker, III".

Samuel C. Slaymaker, III
Executive Director