

## **Statement on Name Change from “Rock Ford Plantation” to “Historic Rock Ford”**

At its regular June meeting, the Board of Trustees of the Rock Ford Foundation voted to change the unofficial, “doing business as” name of the Rock Ford property from “Rock Ford Plantation” to “Historic Rock Ford.” The official name of our organization will remain the “Rock Ford Foundation,” the name under which it was incorporated in 1958. Therefore, to provide context, a few words about the history of the use of the word “Plantation” at Rock Ford seem to be in order.

During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Pennsylvanians used the word “plantation” to refer to “a property containing between one hundred and one thousand acres. In general, colonials referred to land with fewer than one hundred acres as a farm, and greater than one thousand acres as a manor.” The term did not become linked to slavery until the aftermath of the Civil War. (“Plantations” from Encyclopedia of Greater Philadelphia; philadelphiaencyclopedia.org). During the period of Edward Hand’s ownership, Rock Ford contained 177 acres, thus meeting the contemporary designation of a “plantation.” However, it is interesting to note that the Hands do not appear to have used the title “Rock Ford Plantation” when referring to their home. Both Edward Hand’s and his daughter Margaret’s grave markers in Saint James churchyard state that each “died at Rockford.” Following Katherine Hand’s death, the surviving Hand family members listed Rock Ford for sale in an 1806 newspaper ad under the title of “ROCKFORD FARM.”

In addition to the historical use of “plantation,” this name change was prompted also to address the presentation and interpretation of people and places in American history connected to the institution of slavery. Rock Ford’s sensitivity to the issue and the effect that it has on our community demanded this further consideration. We want Rock Ford to continue to be viewed as a place that is welcoming to all people, and the continuing use of the word “Plantation” in our unofficial title makes this difficult.

Nevertheless, we feel that it is important to emphasize that this name change should not be interpreted either as a sacrifice of historical authenticity for reasons of expediency or as an effort to “sweep under the rug” the difficult issue of slavery at Rock Ford. For the past several years, our staff and volunteers have researched slavery in 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century Lancaster County and have consulted with the African American Historical Society of South-Central Pennsylvania in how to best present this topic in our guided house tours.

When Rock Ford was first opened to the public as an historic house museum in 1960, its title was simply “Rock Ford.” After the opening of the Kauffman Museum in the upper level of the barn in 1976, the title evolved into “Historic Rock Ford & Kauffman Museum of Folk Arts & Crafts.” During the 1980’s and early 1990’s, our newsletter was entitled “Rock Ford News” with the subtitle “Newsletter of the Rock Ford Plantation.” Nevertheless, our working title continued to be “Historic Rock Ford” well into the later 1990’s. The use of “Rock Ford Plantation” as our main title appears to date from the later 1990’s and appears to have been more of a reaction against the “Historic Rock Ford” than an embracing of the word “Plantation.” Concerns were expressed about people not being able to find Rock Ford in the phone book by looking under “R” instead of under “H.” Perhaps some felt that the name too closely resembled “Historic Strasburg,” a local restaurant and conference center built in faux colonial style circa 1976.

For the past several years in light of the coming of the Snyder Gallery, we have been evaluating the “re-branding” of Rock Ford. Although we had not yet made any final decisions, we wished to use a title that would encompass both the house and the new Snyder Gallery. The new title would be unveiled with a new logo to coincide with the opening of the Snyder Gallery (which had been scheduled for June 20<sup>th</sup>). While the Covid-19 shutdown has delayed the opening of the Snyder Gallery, our board felt that it was appropriate to move forward with a new name designation as soon as possible. “Historic Rock Ford” is meant to encompass both the General Edward Hand House, the

John J. Snyder Jr. Gallery of Early Lancaster County Decorative Arts and our 33 acres of gardens and grounds. Since Rock Ford originated as a term of location (the ford in the Conestoga at the rock), we believe that our new title provides a sense of place while setting forth our mission of presenting and interpreting history. It has already served Rock Ford well in years past, and we trust that it will continue to do so in the years to come.