Welcome to the Historic Rock Ford Summer 2020 e-newsletter

We want to offer a special thanks to all of our members for standing with us during this difficult time.

If your membership has expired or is due to expire, renewal details may be found by clicking here.

For a list of individuals and businesses who joined or renewed membership during our 2019-20 Annual Membership Appeal beginning November 1, 2019 through June 15, 2020, please click here. This list will be updated in future newsletters.

UGI Funds "The House That Hand Built"
by Debbie Smith, Rock Ford Board Vice-President and Chair of Education Committee

Rock Ford Foundation is pleased to report that in mid-November 2019, Rock Ford received a grant of $10,000 to fund the school program "The House That Hand Built." Having submitted a lengthy application for the program to the PA Department of Community and Economic Development (Tax Division) in August 2019, Rock Ford Foundation earned the status of Educational Improvement Organization. This designation allows UGI and other EITC companies to use their Educational Improvement Tax Credits to donate directly to us.

One of the requirements to achieve EIO status is for Rock Ford to have an educational partner. To reach that goal, I met with the School Community Coordinator at School District of Lancaster, Tara Ruby, and fifth grade teachers at George Washington Elementary School to introduce the ideas and activities in the program. The purpose of the program, "The House That Hand Built," is to provide S.T.E.M. experiences-science, technology, engineering, mathematics-that reinforce and extend the School District of Lancaster's science, social studies and mathematics curricula. The program, consisting of five activities, introduces students to the process that Edward Hand would have followed as he built his home in Lancaster in 1792. Activities such as choosing the home's location, surveying the land, finding water sources and designing and building the home are included.
Students make, throw and strike bricks and participate in an archaeological "dig" to study artifacts similar to those that former occupants of the property left behind.

Four classrooms from Washington Elementary School came in the fall to survey with replicas of 18th century Gunter's Chains, study how bedrock filtered water for the Hand's to drink and to explore the exterior and interior of the house to look for architectural features and clues about the Hands everyday life. Not even a bomb threat at Washington Elementary, the night before, dampened the enthusiasm of the students who visited. They loved learning in the mansion and on our beautiful meadows and grounds. One student remarked "Thank you for letting us run in the fields." Another group of students cheered when I told them they would be returning in the spring (2020). However, COVID-19 disrupted our plans.

Now, our sights are set on having both Washington Elementary and Price Elementary fifth-graders come in for the 2020-2021 school year. We have applied to both UGI and another EITC business to support the program for another year, as we strive to build the infrastructure of our Rock Ford's educational programming. Our greatest immediate need is for a storage shed.

Many Rock Ford volunteers gave their time and energy to the students, Nancy Koch and Nancy Bennett in the house; Ann Carter and Andrea Owens from the Junior League taught architecture, Bob and Debbie Smith, Rock Ford, and John Fuehrer, from Fuehrer Associates, LTD guided the surveying activities; and Sallie Gregory from Lancaster County Conservation offered the groundwater activity. In the spring program, John Gardner, Thaddeus Stevens College of Technology will direct the masonry activities and Cindy Trussell and Nancy Wiker, Rock Ford, will conduct the archaeology program, "Is it Trash or Is it Treasure?"

We welcome your comments or questions and if you're interested in joining us, please contact Debbie Smith at schoolprograms@HistoricRockford.org.

Rock Ford Opens for Limited Tours

The Rock Ford mansion opened for its 2020 season with limited tours on July 7. In accordance with recommended guidelines, tours are limited to a maximum of 10 visitors with advance reservations through our on-line ticketing site, Yapsody. Tour times are 10 am, 12 pm and 2 pm.

Tour guides begin with an introduction on the porch of the mansion. Inside the mansion, social distancing measures are in practice, and guests are required to wear masks. Between tours, areas of contact will be sanitized. Hand sanitizer is also offered to guests upon entry to the mansion. For information on advance tickets, please click here.

"What did they grow here?"
by Sarah Alberico, Curator

I get asked this question a lot when I am giving tours. Being unable to provide a definitive answer, I decided to dig through some primary sources and shed a bit of light on the subject of what kinds of crops would have been grown at Rock Ford during the Hand family's period of residence. We know that Rock Ford was a working farm, consisting of 177 acres of land used for crops, livestock, and orchards. The best primary source that I have come across that mentions crops grown at Rock Ford is entitled, Agricultural Enquiries on Plaister of Paris, published in Philadelphia by C. Cist in 1797. The author, Richard Peters, collected numerous facts, observations, and conjectures on the use of plaister of Paris as manure. One of the contributing persons answering Peters queries is Edward Hand. He responds in a letter dated, "Rock Ford, July 30th, 1796." Amidst all the talk of manure, soil, and bushels, we can gather a list of all the crops that Hand mentions: wheat, corn, oats, mixed grass, grain, potatoes (an entire acre), barley, red clover, white clover, blue grass and timothy.

Following the death of General Edward Hand, there was an ad in the Lancaster Intelligencer on November 22, 1805 for a public sale of items. Listed "to be sold" were the following: Wheat, rye, Indian corn, oats, hay, and potatoes; horses and cows; sheep of the Barbary breed.

Tobacco, a staple of so many Lancaster County farms, does not appear to have been cultivated at Rock Ford in the Hand era. Curious about the history of farming tobacco in Lancaster, I did a quick search and came across a 1982 article by Daniel B. Good of Georgia Southern College titled, "The Localization of Tobacco Production in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania." Good writes that, "Tobacco was raised in Lancaster County as early as 1828 by farmers near Ephrata." Therefore, it appears that Edward hand did not grow tobacco.
In addition to crops and livestock, there is another primary source that happens to list everything grown in the orchards; an ad for the public sale of "Rockford Farm" was in a Lancaster newspaper, dated December 12, 1806. The ad mentions, "There are also on the premises, two excellent young apple orchards, all of the best engrafted fruits, and two peach orchards, together with a great variety of the choicest engrafted fruits, such as pears, plumbs, apricots, & c."

We also know of the Hand Plum, a yellow dessert plum. The original tree grew at Rock Ford, and first fruited about 1790, according to *The Plums of New York* by U.P. Hedrick, Albany, 1911 (see illustration of the Hand Plum above).

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**Micro Wedding Option Added for Rentals**

Acknowledging a trend in weddings toward more intimate celebrations, Rock Ford is delighted to now offer Micro Wedding rentals. To qualify as a Micro Wedding, an event would have no more than 50 guests and a core event time with guests present of seven hours including set-up and clean-up. Micro Weddings may be booked Monday through Thursday, but if an event is booked on a Friday or Saturday, it must be less than 60 days from the date of the event.

For details on Micro Weddings and other rentals of the facilities at Historic Rock Ford, please call our Rental Coordinator Amanda Elslager at 717-799-8751 or email rentals@HistoricRockford.org.

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