



# Circa 1794

*The Newsletter of Historic Rock Ford*

SPRING 2021

## **Snyder Gallery Opening in April**

By Pamela Stoner, Board of Trustees, Rock Ford Foundation

Eight years ago, Historic Rock Ford lost a good friend when renowned antiquarian and scholar John J. Snyder, Jr. died at the age of 67. John had given so much of his time and treasure to the Foundation over the years as Board President, Collections Committee Chair and in the gift of a vast array of period furnishings on display in the rooms of the Hand Mansion. From an exquisite Lancaster County Federal Style dining table to the delicate English Creamware that it holds, John's influence exists just about everywhere at Rock Ford.

Almost a year after John's passing, we received a phone call from Jamie Price, John's longtime friend and an executor of his estate. Jamie wanted to know if our organization was prepared to accept the items from John's collection specific to Lancaster County that had been earmarked for Rock Ford? If we were not, Jamie explained, most of these pieces would go to auction and Rock Ford would be a beneficiary of the proceeds from their sale according to the provisions of John's will.

We had to consider all the consequences of accepting such a sizable collection. The space requirement alone was an enormous obstacle, but John had spent a lifetime gathering and studying important antiquities from Lancaster County and Rock Ford had benefited many times over from his generosity. We simply had to find a way to accept John's final legacy and to find a way to honor the wishes of a man who was instrumental to Rock Ford's success and, just as importantly, we had to keep this part of his collection in Lancaster.

After years of imagining, planning, fundraising, building, renovating, and conserving, we are very excited to open the doors of the John J. Snyder, Jr. Gallery of Early Lancaster County Decorative Arts on Tuesday April 13, 2021. There were times when the logistics of bringing a new gallery space to life amidst a global pandemic presented delays and other challenges but the dedicated project team persevered and are now ready to share John's collection with the public.

Gallery visitors will see Lancaster County tall clocks, furniture, paintings, silver, and more from the period John Snyder himself called the "Golden Age of Lancaster County Artisanry." The Kauffman Collection of Lancaster Long Rifles will also be on display and will help to illustrate one of the Gallery's important themes, the nexus between artistry and utility so common in early Lancaster County decorative arts. An architecturally harmonious addition to the Rock Ford Pennsylvania Bank Barn will serve as a new welcoming point for visitors to the museum.

We have been overwhelmed by the amount of support and encouragement we have received from the Lancaster philanthropic community for this project. We could not be more proud to have received the trust and support of so many and to finally present the gift of the John J. Snyder, Jr. Gallery to Lancaster, a gift they helped to provide. A very special and completely unique donor recognition exhibit piece installed in the Gallery will commemorate their contributions.

The inaugural year exhibit was curated by Lisa Minardi. Lisa is the Director of the Center for Pennsylvania German Studies in Trappe, PA and an author or contributor to several books on the decorative arts of South Central Pennsylvania. She is a graduate of the Winterthur Program in Early American Culture and was a protégé of John Snyder. There was no one better suited to serve as guest curator for this exhibit.

The story of Lancaster County in Early America has too often been overshadowed by larger cities like Philadelphia, New York, and Boston but Lancaster County was an extremely consequential region in the development of our nation. The Snyder Gallery will help to tell its story by highlighting the diversity, industry, artistry, and craftsmanship that defined it.



Visitors to the Snyder Gallery will enter through the Ann B. Barshinger Welcome Center at the rear of the Barn.

**2020-21 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, 2020 to March 1, 2021**. This list will be updated in future newsletters.

**Katherine Hand Society (\$5000)**

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## Rock Ford Board of Trustees Writes Strategic Plans

By Deborah Smith, President,  
Board of Trustees, Rock Ford Foundation

“If you don’t know where you’re going, you’ll probably end up somewhere else.” This statement is attributed to Confucius, but it may as well have been our Trustees if asked why they are involved in strategic planning. If we are to move and progress, we have to think and act strategically because we are heading into opportunities and challenges in the future.

These challenges include dealing with uncertainty, finding scarce resources to fulfill our mission, competing for visitors’ dollars and meeting expectations for shifting social and political environments.

The Board of Trustees for Rock Ford Foundation has clocked about 150 hours examining, exploring and defining our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. This work has culminated in strategic goals stressing concerns such as:

- allocating our many resources efficiently and adjusting our operations to maximize revenue and minimize expenses
- instituting programming that meets the highest museum standards
- expanding our volunteer base by offering opportunities in programming and involvement with the Snyder Gallery
- using our strengths to minimize threats, such as loss of revenue due to unforeseen circumstances

Our Board honors our talented volunteers and committee members who are the backbone of Rock Ford. Because our volunteers have always functioned within an environment dedicated to fulfilling Rock Ford’s mission, their role in strategic planning has already been acknowledged, as their yearly goals correlate with the defined strategies.

Our strategies and goals are being written so that they are aspirational and attainable. We can measure our progress because each action step, its time-range, and responsible authority is clearly defined and stated. We understand the reality of uncertainty, but fortunately, going through this process together, we know where we are going.

## Former “Head Hostess” of Rock Ford, Ann Taylor Passes Away

By Samuel C. Slaymaker, Executive Director

On January 14, 2021, Ann L. Taylor passed away peacefully at the age of 92. From the early 1970’s through well into the 1990’s, Ann served as the “Head Hostess” of Rock Ford. During much of this period, guided tours were not given by “docents” or “guides” but, rather, by female “hostesses” attired in period dress. In effect, Ann was Rock Ford’s Executive Director for over 20 years, a watershed period which included the construction of the Kauffman Barn and museum and an unprecedented increase in visitation during the years surrounding the Bicentennial. In June of 1975, she helped to oversee Rock Ford’s first major Revolutionary War Encampment and Battlefield re-enactment which was held at Rock Ford to the delight of large crowds over a two-day weekend. The 1970’s was also the era of the extremely popular “Tennis and Crumpets” fundraiser for Rock Ford.



Ann Taylor with the Board president Rufus A. Fulton, Jr. (photo from *Lancaster Sunday News*, April 1975)

According to Steve Trapnell, who served under Ann’s tutelage when he was a tour guide during high school and college: “She displayed a heartfelt dedication to Rock Ford, a true love of history, and the ability to make our group of volunteers and part-time staff feel like family... thanks to her leadership, I developed an appreciation for the work of historic sites. She made Rock Ford a rewarding and fun place to work, and I truly value her dedication and friendship.”

As Ann’s successor, it is a bit of a strange coincidence that, for the past 14 years, I have lived a few houses down the street from her house. We would frequently exchange waves as a drove by while she sat on her sundeck and I would sometimes stop by so that we could chat about Rock Ford. Until almost the end of her life, she lived alone in the same house that she had occupied with her late husband, Richard, during her Rock Ford years. She retained a vital mind and spirit, and her home remained filled with antiques and books about American history. Ann provides a vivid reminder that all that Rock Ford has become has been built upon the work of those who came before us. She will be remembered fondly, and her legacy will be cherished at Rock Ford.

Ann’s family has directed that memorial contributions in her memory may be made to the Rock Ford Foundation.



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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.



**Welcome Alison Shannon!**

Looking forward to opening the Snyder Gallery on April 13, there will be a new friendly face to greet visitors upon arrival. Our new part-time employee is Lancaster native, Alison Shannon. She comes to us with a BA of Art in History and Museum Studies from Juniata College and her MA in Art Gallery and Museum Studies from The University of Manchester, UK. We think she will be a great fit for Rock Ford. She was previously a digital archivist for the Imperial War Museum in Manchester UK.

Her hobbies include reading, skiing, and sewing, and she has set a goal to eventually make her own clothes. Alison has two greyhounds named Buster and Babs. She loves to travel and has been to ten different countries but has a soft spot in her heart for England. Be sure to say “Hi” to Alison when you visit!

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