



Circa 1794

The Newsletter of Historic Rock Ford

SUMMER 2022

Special Exhibit opens in Snyder Gallery

Long Rifles of the American Revolution: How Lancaster County Craftsmen Helped Win the War is now open 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 by clicking the button below. If you are a current member of the Rock Ford Foundation, admission to this special exhibit is included with your membership. Simply select the date that you would like to visit and choose "Rock Ford Member" as the payment option. If you are unsure about your membership status, please contact the Museum Office at 717-392-7223 ext. 103.



Thank you to our sponsors for their generous support of this special exhibit at Historic Rock Ford:

Founding Sponsor: The Richard C. von Hess Foundation
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School Students Return to Historic Rock Ford

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

Historic Rock Ford volunteers were thrilled to welcome approximately 300 school students who wanted to learn about the Hand family and their place in the history of our country. After having experienced two years of difficult learning situations during Covid, the students were eager to participate in our "Gorgeous Georgian" house tours, our archaeological program "Trash or Treasure" and our popular Discover History series of activities including wearing period-style clothing, arithmetic games and penmanship with pen-and-ink.



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This year's new program, "Letters," was created for fifth graders who study the Revolutionary War. In this activity, students read and discussed unedited (but reprinted) letters from General George Washington to Lt. Colonel Edward Hand. Topics in the letters included orders for Hand to recruit qualified soldiers, to inoculate his men for smallpox and to cautiously persuade local citizenry to supply them with food, animals and forage for their horses before the next battle. Although the style of writing in the letters was challenging, when the students discussed and shared their interpretations with one another, they could understand more than if they read them by themselves.

Visitors to Rock Ford included students from Lititz Area Mennonite School, Quarryville Elementary, Hans Herr Elementary and the PACE after-school program. Questioning why Hand's story is not in their current school curriculum, one teacher remarked during her visit Hand and Rock Ford will definitely be included next year in her 5th grade classroom's study of the Revolutionary War.

In all its school programming, Rock Ford provides opportunities for students to connect with and explore the life of Edward Hand and the complex issues that shaped our nation.

Debbie Smith is the chair of the School Programs Committee and is President of the Rock Ford Foundation Board of Trustees. School Program Volunteers include: Carolyn Bertrand, Moses Fisher, Isaac Fisher, Tom Gehr, Glenda Jardel, Nancy Koch, Dana Lewis, Sally Patterson, Mariah Serra, Sam Slaymaker, Debbie Smith, Pam Stoner, Cindy Trussell and Nancy Wiker.

Photo above: Mrs. Shenk and her 3rd grade students from Hans Herr Elementary School.

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.

There is a lot of research and plenty of trial and error involved in this process. Early receipts are not always easy to follow and there is quite a bit of assumed knowledge involved. Some attempts at both the real dishes and the faux ones are more successful than others and occasionally we miss the mark altogether. Not all historic dishes are easy to replicate but luckily there are a few people across the country doing it so when something is just too difficult, we may commission it from one of them.

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.

As always, the goal of the HRF house tour is to bring the stories of its people to life and help visitors relate them to their modern lives. Food production, preparation and dining practices are topics that are almost universally of interest to our visitors. Most will tell you that the kitchen is their favorite room in the house and in recent years, the kitchen garden has become a Rock Ford highlight. These are both wonderful places to encourage visitors to acknowledge the labor and skills of the working people at Rock Ford during the Hand period of ownership but the dining table is where all this skill and effort were ultimately put on display for the benefit of the family and their guests.

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!

Photo above: Boiled Potato Pudding (front) and Mutton Pie (back) on the dining room table in the Hand Mansion

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.



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.



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

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Historic Rock Ford, an Educational Improvement Organization, sincerely thanks Fulton Forward and UGI for their generous support of our school programming.



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