

African American Historical Society Supports Rock Ford's Efforts to Reveal Truths

By Deborah Smith, Rock Ford Vice President, Board of Trustees and School Programs Committee Chair

Rock Ford has long been a trusted source of historical information and interpretation, and after our March 2 conference at LancasterHistory.org with representatives of the African American Historical Society, that tradition continues. At the conference, our docents learned more of the story of Rock Ford's connection to African American culture. To meet the challenge of learning this new information, thirty Rock Ford associates along with four members of the African American Historical Society of South-Central Pennsylvania, met to listen, discuss and talk with one another about the nuances of communicating African American history. Sam Slaymaker, our Executive Director and Sarah Alberico, Museum Curator began the seminar with a heartfelt welcome and an explanation of what we hoped to accomplish for the day.

We spent most of the morning learning new history about Rock Ford's material culture from Cindy Trussell, a member of the Collections Committee. She spoke about how our fabrics, mahogany chairs, silver and sugar, for example were related to the perpetuation of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. And, because of the enslaved Frank's presence at Rock Ford, we considered how differently his story would have been had it been told from Frank's point of view. Why should we call him a "freedom-seeker" instead of a "runaway?" And, why should we use the word "enslaved" as opposed to "slave?" While these topics and stories engender sorrow, it was shared moments of honesty, humor and humanity that brought us joy.

In the latter part of the morning, Barbara Mobarak African American Historical Society member, presented a brief history of slavery beyond Lancaster, sharing with us how slavery was not always about race, and that slavery in African societies differed from that in European societies. To help us figure out how to incorporate this new information, Sarah gave us tools and methods we could use to decide what information was essential to present to our visitors and that which was secondary.

After lunch, we discussed how to deal with uncomfortable situations about race that arose at Rock Ford and prepared for those that could occur in the future as we expand our tours to wider audiences whose experiences in life differ from ours. AAHS members, Betty Hurdle, Kathleen Anderson, Neicy DeShields and Barbara Mobarak shared a certain familiarity with hurtful situations in which persons have said, "I don't see color" or "what are you?" Mutual understanding about challenging situations gave us a common space to uncover issues inherent to race and ethnicity. When we have discussions like this, we docents are better equipped to deal with unexpected uncomfortable comments that could occur in our tours.

Upcoming Special Events

Saturday, April 6

The House That Hand Built
9:30 am to 1:30 pm (Ages 12+)

Sunday, April 7

Children's Event: It's Tea Time
2 pm to 4 pm

Thursday, April 11

Guest Speakers Donald Kautz and Brenton Webber present
"Conestoga Navigation:
A Slackwater Canal"
4:30 pm

Please visit
www.rockfordplantation.org
for further details.



Betty Hurdle shares her experiences with Rock Ford docents.

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Rock Ford acknowledges and thanks our 2019 Season Sponsors for their generous support:
Thomas G. Englert and The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission



2018-19 Membership Appeal

Rock Ford would like to thank the following individuals and organizations who became new members or who renewed their memberships **from November 1, 2018 to March 1, 2019**. This list will be updated in future newsletters.

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Elaine Heumann Gurian, author of the book *Civilizing the Museum*, writes "It is the story told, the message given and the ability of social groups to experience it together that provide the essential ingredients of making a museum important." We believe that Rock Ford is important and we strive to remain relevant to all members of our community.

We thank all who participated, particularly the members of African American Historical Society who helped us build confidence to share this information with visitors. Their continued support helps us today and encourages us to go forward into the future. We will continue to share and grow together.

References for planning seminar include:

Interpreting Slavery at Museums and Historic Sites.

Edited by Kristin L. Gallas and Perry. 2015

African American History and Culture at Museums and Historic Sites.

Edited by Max van Balgooy. 2015

Civilizing the Museum: the collected writings of Elaine Heumann Gurian. 2006, Routledge.

Sam Slaymaker, Sarah Alberico, Pam Stoner and Cindy Trussell helped to edit the script for the conference.



Curator Sarah Alberico reminds attendees that Rock Ford must remain a trusted source of information.

Article photos by Nancy E. Bradley



Professor Lynn M. Brooks put the dancers through their paces in a practice session focused on period movement. Live music was provided by Christopher Brooks of Creative Violinist.

From bottom left clockwise: Mark Jardel, Barbara Brown, Nancy Koch, Lori Black, violinist Christopher Brooks, Ron Black, Cindy Trussell, Pam Stoner, and Professor Brooks.

Photo by Glenda Jardel.

Historic Rock Ford Dancers

Warm Up for the Season

On February 28, the Historic Rock Ford Dancers enjoyed a special dance practice with warm-up and movement exercises taught by Lynn M. Brooks, Professor of Humanities and Dance, Emerita, Franklin & Marshall College. Professor Brooks helped the dancers answer the question, "How did Federal Americans dance?" With exercises addressing deportment, posture, hand position, dance steps and dancer interaction, our volunteer dancers practiced moving to the music as the Hand family and friends would have done at Rock Ford in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Christopher Brooks, owner of Creative Violinist, provided lively music throughout the session.

Accompany the Historic Rock Ford Dancers on May 19 as they raise a Maypole, a custom that Ireland native Edward Hand would have found familiar.

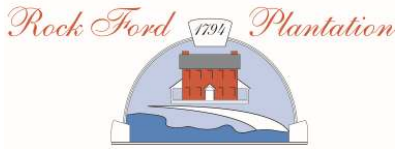
Join the Dancers in a dance lesson on June 30 and August 18.

If you would like more information on the Historic Rock Ford Dancers, please contact Glenda Jardel at modernbaker@gmail.com.

Upcoming Warm Hearth Committee Meetings

The Warm Hearth Committee will be meeting to conduct cooking demonstrations in the Rock Ford kitchen on Sunday, May 19 and Sunday, August 18.

Cooking demonstrations are conducted from 1 pm to 3 pm and are included with regular tour admission.



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The Foundation is supported by admissions, gifts, grants, earned income from barn rentals, museum memberships, fundraising events, and bequests.

Memorial Contributions Received

Long-time Rock Ford member Jeannette S. Arment passed away on January 31, 2019. Mrs. Arment specifically requested that any memorial contributions be made in her name to Rock Ford. As a result of her generous request, Rock Ford received a total of \$1,125 in gifts. Ms. Arment enjoyed attending many events at Rock Ford, including “Sleepy Hollow” and May Fair. Many volunteers would recognize her when she came to visit. She will be missed.



“Drills & Skills Day” Planned for May

The First Regiment Flying Camp of Lancaster County—Capt. Joseph Work’s Company is tentatively planning a “Drills & Skills Day” on the grounds of Rock Ford on Sunday, May 26. This event will feature living history and firing demonstrations. Further information will be posted on our website in the coming weeks. The First Regiment Flying Camp has previously demonstrated at Rock Ford’s May Fair Celebration.