



Circa 1794

The Newsletter of Historic Rock Ford

New Focus Exhibit Opens April 1 in the Snyder Gallery

By Samuel C. Slaymaker, Executive Director

Following the success of our Long Rifles exhibition last year, Historic Rock Ford is delighted to announce a new focus exhibit in the Snyder Gallery for our 2023 Season. “The Market Town & The Metropolis: 18th Century Lancaster and Its Artistic Connections to Philadelphia” will open on April 1, which is also the first day of our tour season.

Throughout most of the 18th century, Philadelphia remained the largest city in the American colonies and then in the fledgling United States. In many ways, it was America’s political, financial and cultural epicenter. During this same period, the Borough of Lancaster, Pennsylvania was one of the largest non-coastal towns in America and was closely tied to Philadelphia both commercially and culturally. In addition to serving as a source of raw materials, food and supplies for Philadelphia and its environs as well as an important market for its elegantly crafted goods, Lancaster, through which passed the “great wagon road,” increasingly came to serve as Philadelphia and its port’s gateway to western settlement. This already strong connection was both manifested and further strengthened with the completion of the Lancaster-Philadelphia Turnpike in 1794, the first long-distance macadam road in the new United States.

With Lancaster’s growing affluence and stronger ties to Philadelphia as the 18th Century progressed, the connections between both in the fields of the decorative arts increasingly flourished. Lancaster furniture makers developed unique styles that, while clearly influenced by Philadelphia artisans, did not merely mimic them. Artisans, such as furniture makers Thomas Tufft and Peter Frick, worked in both Lancaster and in Philadelphia. Examples of work attributed to both men will be included in this exhibit and demonstrate influences from both Philadelphia and Lancaster.

In the words of John Snyder, “In addition to the general influence of the coastal metropolis on Lancaster, a more specific role was played by wealthy, educated Lancastrians with strong family and professional links to Philadelphia, these were local ‘tastemakers’ who introduced new styles to Lancaster by their ownership of imported goods bought in Philadelphia, and their patronage of Philadelphia artists and artisans.” Snyder cites Judge Jasper Yeates as the most significant of these “tastemakers.” The exhibit will include a rare, late-18th century Philadelphia Chippendale camelback sofa believed to have once belonged to Yeates that is part of a private family collection and which has never before been publicly exhibited.

Also included among such Lancaster County “tastemakers” are those affluent persons who had their portraits painted in Philadelphia. This exhibit features portraits of Lancaster Countians Judge Henry Slaymaker (*above left*) and Faithful Richardson Slaymaker (*above right*) by early Swedish immigrant to Philadelphia, Gustavus Hesselius, and by his son John. These outstanding portraits are also part of a private collection and have not been publicly exhibited since 1971 at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts.

It is our hope and expectation that this exhibit will highlight the mutual influence in the decorative arts between 18th century Lancaster and Philadelphia. Because of the significance of the pieces included as well as the unique nature of the exhibit, we believe that it will garner not only regional but national attention that will amplify the significance of Historic Rock Ford as an important destination for all those who cherish early American decorative arts.

The Market Town & The Metropolis

18th Century Lancaster and
Its Artistic Connections to
Philadelphia



2022-23 Membership Appeal

Historic Rock Ford would like to thank the following individuals and organizations who became new members or who renewed their memberships **from October 1, 2022 to March 1, 2023**. This list will be updated in future newsletters.

Katherine Hand Society (\$5000)

Donald & Elizabeth Steckler

Jasper Yeates Society (\$1000)

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Reflections on the 2023 Small Museum Association Conference

By Mariah Serra, Associate Curator

What does it mean to find joy in one's work? Do cultural institutions like museums create spaces for open dialogue on complex topics like the mental health of their employees? What does it mean to show grace to one another? What if we cared for ourselves and colleagues the way we care for our collections? In a field so keenly focused on exhibiting and disseminating information to the public for the greater good of the communities we serve, we do not often find the time to question how our work impacts ourselves. This past February, keynote speaker and Executive Director of Maryland Humanities Lindsey Baker addressed these topics and more in her address to the 2023 Small Museum Association Conference held at the Hotel du Pont, Wilmington, DE. In addition to her eloquent description of how to show grace to one another—by listening, holding space, and honoring the differences of others—a particular part of Baker's speech that resonated with me differentiated between "importance" and "urgency," and the significance of understanding these terms in relation to our individual projects and collective work within small cultural institutions.



Attendees gather at the Hotel du Pont for the 2023 SMA Conference.

Prioritizing joy in one's work is a singular experience, requires deep reflection, and pushes back against feelings of fear, inadequacy, and perfectionism. When overwhelmed by research avenues and project deadlines, Baker encouraged taking a step back, revisiting your goals, rereading your institution's mission statement, and collaborating with your team to come up with healthy solutions not only for your institution but also for yourself. Perhaps the most practical tip Baker shared with us after its implementation at Maryland Humanities was the act of time-blocking your schedule: By dedicating certain work hours to a specific project, you minimize distractions and increase your productivity.

My favorite session of the conference was entitled "Participants Not Patrons: Assistive Technology for Visitors with Visual Disabilities," lead by Lindsey Crawford, Public Programs Coordinator at the James Monroe Museum and Memorial Library. Having written a rather extensive research paper on assistive technology (AT) for low vision and blind museum goers during my undergraduate days, I was excited to learn how the field has grown since 2017 and walked away from the session with new resources and contacts that could help improve Historic Rock Ford's accessibility. The bulk of Crawford's presentation focused on implementing descriptive text and user-centered design—an approach that engages the opinions and knowledge of some of the users for whom you are creating AT—to create appealing and accessible content for low-vision and blind guests. Her recommendations included adding large print and Braille to object labels, exploring audio guide solutions, as well as adding tactile experiences/activities.

I appreciated that many of her solutions were practical, easily implemented, and considered the time and energy museum professionals have available, as well as the financial barriers small museums face. Now that the Snyder Gallery is operational, we must constantly look to improve the next focus exhibit, new program, activity or event and make them increasingly accessible to all members of the public. The addition of a Braille or large print book about the Snyder Collection is an addition to the Gallery that Historic Rock Ford could create, distinguishing us from other local historic sites who have yet to implement such tools into their museum culture.

As I approach my one year anniversary of working for the Rock Ford Foundation, in looking ahead to what is next for us as a museum, I am continually searching for approachable technology to implement into our guest experience. After our new website is launched and Snyder Gallery audio guide is in production this summer, I would enjoy collaborating with a volunteer to record a DIY video tour of the second floor of the Hand Mansion to be played on an iPad so differently abled or elderly guests may appreciate those parts of the Mansion as well. It is a straightforward, low-tech way of accommodating all our guests that may want to experience the most private rooms of the Hand Mansion without structurally changing the house or altering the tour experience for other visitors.

Overall, I enjoyed the opportunity to experience SMA 2023 and am looking forward to attending again in the future. I found value in each session and walked away having learned a great deal about what surrounding small museums are doing to preserve and protect their collections and communities, as well as care for their staff.



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HRF Named as Recipient of a 2023 Americana Corner Preserving America Grant

Historic Rock Ford is proud to announce that it has been selected as a 2023 Americana Corner Preserving America Grant program recipient. This program was established to assist non-profit organizations in the telling of the story of America from its founding era through its first century as a nation. This year, 119 grant awardees across 35 states were selected to receive between \$5,000 and \$10,000 each from the Americana Corner Fund at Donors Trust. Our 2023 Focus Exhibit “The Market Town & The Metropolis” will be funded in part by our \$5,000 grant.

Americana Corner



PRESERVING AMERICA
GRANT

PHMC Grant Awarded

In December 2022, the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission announced that Historic Rock Ford was awarded a General Operating Support Grant in the amount of \$4,000. The PHMC is a state agency funded by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. These funds will be 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 re-opens for its 2023 season on Saturday, April 1. Hand Mansion guided tours are offered Tuesday-Friday and Sunday at 10 AM, 12 PM and 2 PM and Saturday at 10 AM and 12 PM. The Snyder Gallery is open Tuesday-Friday and Sunday from 10 AM to 4 PM and Saturday from 10 AM to 2 PM.

To view the expanded digital version of our newsletter, please visit HistoricRockFord.org/in-the-news.

Due to the space limitations of the print edition, our digital newsletter often contains additional articles and photos.

Historic Rock Ford acknowledges and thanks our 2023 Season Sponsors for their generous support:

Sponsors: Thomas G. Englert, Daniel B. Strickler, Jr. and Ellen B. Strickler, and The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission



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

