



The Governor's Gossip

August 2022
v. 40, no. 3

**Newsletter of the Governor Wolf Historical Society,
Owner of the Wolf Academy Historic Site, East Allen Township**

Upcoming Events

Visit the Keith House on Aug. 13



The Keith House

By Annette Vliet

On Saturday, August 13, we will travel 66 miles (75 minutes) to Horsham, Montgomery County, to visit the Keith House, the only surviving residence of a colonial Pennsylvania governor. The guided house tour admission is adults \$8 or seniors \$6. Meet at 8:30 a.m. in the parking lot of the GWHS campus to carpool to the site. The group will lunch at the nearby Joseph Ambler Inn in Horsham. Call 610-837-9015 if interested. Everyone welcome!

The construction of the Keith house began around 1722 for the Provincial Governor of Pennsylvania, Sir William Keith. Originally called "Fountain Low" because of many natural springs, the property served as a summer residence. It also had a "long house" for servants, a barn, a malt house and several smaller buildings on more than 1700 acres known now as Graeme Park. The Keith House has been largely unchanged since its construction except for a restoration by Dr. Thomas Graeme in the mid-18th century and a minor restoration by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission in the 1960s.

Autumn Tea — September 18

By Linda Kortz

The Gov. Wolf Historical Society will host an Autumn Tea on Sunday, September 18, from 2 to 4 p.m. Our theme will be The Language of Flowers.

Learn about the forgotten secret messages conveyed by flowers given to friends and lovers in days gone by. When feelings were not openly spoken, a small nosegay could send a girl's heart racing.

Bring your favorite teacup and spend an afternoon with delicious desserts, finger sandwiches, teas, and music.

Cost is \$20 per person, \$18 for members. Call 610-837-9015 to reserve your seat.

Free historic site tours on the third Saturday of each month, 1-3 p.m. — no reservations needed.



Tavern Nights Resume in September

On September 9, from 7-10 p.m., Tavern Nights are back in the Wolf Academy. This is a wonderful way to end your week! Doors open at 6:45 p.m. to choose a table. Bring your friends for a fun party with live music, dancing and no clean-up! We furnish paper goods, ice, soft drinks, and light snacks with linen covered, candle lit tables. You may bring your party snack trays and goodies. The events are BYOB. Let us know if it's someone's birthday, anniversary, etc.! There is always a raffle for a huge wine & party basket. Admission is \$25 per couple, \$15 single, members \$23 per couple, \$13 single.

Future dates are October 14 and November 11 (second Friday of the month).

Come To Our Picnic — Everyone Welcome!

Annual Picnic
at
Wolf Academy Historic Site
home of
Governor Wolf Historical Society
Sunday, August 21, 2022 12 noon to 4 pm
Bring a dish to share. Hot Dogs, Hamburgers & Sodas provided.
Beer or wine is BYOB.

Rain or Shine

6600 Jacksonville Rd
Bath PA 18014

Bring Lawn Chairs!

Bring Lawn Games!

Governor Wolf Historical Society
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Recording Secretary: Abby Spencer
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This newsletter is published four times a year (February, May, August and November) as a service to its members and the public by the Governor Wolf Historical Society. Contributions are encouraged and may be sent to the editor by the 5th of the publication month, but the Society reserves the right to select and edit all content.

Monthly Meetings

The Society holds monthly meetings at 6:30 p.m. on the second Tuesday of each month in the Monocacy School, located at our historic site, 6600 Jacksonville Road, Bath, PA 18014. All members and interested individuals are invited to attend.

Membership

The Governor Wolf Historical Society is an all volunteer organization dedicated to preserving local history. If you are not a member, we invite you to become a member and support our activities. A membership form is found on page 5 of this newsletter.

We Need Your Email Address!

Our full color electronic newsletter is available in your inbox before the printed black and white version is mailed. Updates about our events and activities are emailed between newsletters. To be added to our email distribution list, please send your email address to Treasurer Kathy Wilhelm at gwhs1958@gmail.com. If you supplied the Society with your email, and you are not getting emails about upcoming activities and events, contact Kathy at the same email.

Historic Site Rentals

The Governor Wolf Historical Society is fully open and ready to rent out our buildings and 3 1/2 acre grounds to host your next birthday party, baby shower, meeting, or even a small wedding. We currently rent out the historic Wolf Academy and Monocacy School and the beautiful surrounding gardens with plenty of parking in the adjacent grassy meadow. If interested in an upcoming rental, please contact Abby Spencer at spencerabby@yahoo.com or 610-428-3975.

Free Historic Site Tours

The Society offers free tours of our three historic buildings, grounds, and new museum on the third Saturday of each month, April through November, from 1-3 p.m. No reservations are needed.

Knowledgeable guides will discuss the history of each building, Gov. George Wolf, and provide details about items in the museum.

The Society is always willing to provide tours to individuals, families, school classes, youth groups, and social organizations at other times. To schedule a tour, call 610-837-9015 or email gwhs1958@gmail.com

Thank You

William Bachman for donating copies of his report cards from the Monocacy School. The Society is trying to compile a list of East Allen teachers and the grades that they taught each year; report cards and class photos provide the needed documentation.

Museum donations

Sandra Gold — clothing, documents, and 19th century books
Norma Lopresti — children's games and a wooden saw cutter
Barbara Wiemann — coal bucket

Calling All Members!!

Your help is needed

Our three buildings and the surrounding grounds need lots of routine upkeep — much more than 15 (aging) board members can handle. Volunteer assistance with routine housework and gardening would help greatly. If you are interested in being contacted from time to time about lending a hand, please email your name and email address to gwhs1958@gmail.com. In the subject line, write Volunteer Cleaning, Volunteer Gardening, or Volunteer Both.

Hope to see you at GWHS!.

From Our President



We have an exciting lineup of activities to finish out the summer and welcome fall — our trip to Graeme Park, open houses, picnic, Tavern Nights, Autumn Tea, Christmas House Tour and holiday festival. All are welcome to attend!

Carol Bear

Annual Dinner



Martha Capwell Fox addresses the Annual Dinner on May 20. Members and guests enjoyed a delicious buffet dinner from Get Fed Catering and were enthusiastic about Capwell Fox's presentation about the industrial development of the Lehigh Valley. Thanks to Abby Spencer for chairing the event. Photo by Barb Wiemann.

Summer Institute of Colonial Crafts

On June 9 and 10 the Society hosted 10 hands-on colonial craft classes. Classes were held in each of our historic buildings by well-



known craft instructors. Grain painting, basket weaving, and redware plate making were some of the historical crafts that students participated in, and then they took home completed projects. If you have not attended one of the institutes yet, consider signing up for the sessions next June.

Student working on a redware design. Photo by Carol Bear.

Lehigh Valley Passport to History At GWHS on July 16

By Annette Vliet

Visitors toured the Wolf Academy Historic site on the third Saturday of the Passport to History month long event. Our two 18th century buildings, the Wolf Academy and the Ralston-McKeen House, and our 19th century schoolhouse offered displays, demonstrators, and light refreshments. Guided tours of the Richard Nye Herb & Pleasure Garden were led by horticulturist Trish Mowen. Beautiful potted plants and flowers were donated for the event by Deborah Evans and Robert Reichert.

The Society was pleased to note that the event attracted visitors from both near and far, including Cumberland County, Berks County, Montgomery County, and New Jersey. Visitors were interested in our activities and displays.

The Wolf Academy

Stunningly detailed woodworking items were available at Wood-Cuts by Bill. Bill Reppert featured personalized signs, custom wood crafts and custom bowl turnings that are all handmade. Bill also demonstrated scroll work done by hand. Robert Swan and Annette Vliet displayed a variety of vintage tools. They ranged from farm tools, hearth cooking tools, and woodworking tools.

Ralston-McKeen House

Jackie Ellenberger welcomed guests at the door of the house. Four volunteers dressed in period costume showed off their skills.

Kathy Wilhelm and Lucienne Hosford demonstrated hearth cooking. Carol Bear showed off her fine frakturs and demonstrated the elaborate techniques. Jean Decker used garden herbs and flowers to create beautiful wreaths.

Monocacy School

Linda Kortz, dressed in period costume, gave personal tours of the newly designed museum. Barbara Wiemann provided historical information for the displays of costumes, basketry and sewing materials.

"Make-it-n-Take-it" crafts were available for the younger visitors. Lights refreshments were served to the many visitors.



Jean Decker with her garden herbs and flowers. Photo by Annette Vliet.

James Ralston, Builder of the Ralston-McKeen House

The first two installments of this Ralston family history covered immigrant James Ralston, his children, and his grandson James Rosbrugh. This chapter examines the life of grandson James Ralston (son of Samuel), and his role in shaping our historic site and township.

Childhood

James Ralston was born in 1767, the oldest son of Samuel and Sarah King Ralston. His father was a prosperous farmer, owning 500 acres in the township. James grew up surrounded by his extended family in the Scots-Irish community. James' childhood ended in 1785 after the death of both parents.

Samuel's will apportioned his estate to his 7 children, with his land to go to his two oldest sons, James and Samuel. He directed that his children live together until son Samuel came of age and that the profits of the estate were to be used to pay for clothing and schooling for the younger children (perhaps the younger sons attended the Allen Township Academy). As the eldest son, James must have assumed some responsibility for raising and guiding his younger siblings.

In 1792, when he came of age, Samuel transferred his share of their father's real estate to James. In turn, James sold this land, he first of his many real estate transactions.

James Builds a Home



James Ralston's grand home. The one story kitchen wing was added later. Photo by Barb Wiemann.

In 1794 James purchased a 105-acre farm east of the Monocacy Creek for 700 pounds. The tract contained the Allen Township Academy, for which his cousin James Rosbrugh had been the driving force. The next year he built a grand eight room center hall cut limestone home at the intersection of the Easton to Siegfried Ferry Road and the road to Bethlehem (present day Jacksonville and School Roads). Why did he buy this 105 acre farm? There is no evidence that James was ever a farmer. As a single man, why did he build such a large house? Was he contemplating marriage? We do not know, but we do know that James overextended himself, and the house and farm were sold at Sheriff sale in January, 1798.

Occupations

What was James' occupation? It seems that James was not a farmer like his father. He might have been a land speculator. There are more than 50 entries under the name James Ralston as a grantee and grantor in the Northampton County deed registers between 1792 and 1815. Some of these entries were for his cousin James Ralston and other Ralston families, but the majority seem to be for our James.

An example of James' real estate flipping transactions

On April 29, 1806 James Ralston, Esq. and his wife Elizabeth of Nazareth Township, purchased 74 perches of land on the Delaware River in Williams Township. They turned around and quickly sold it on June 18, 1806. to George Wolf Jr., Esq., of Easton, for \$120. Yes, this is "our" George Wolf, the future governor of Pennsylvania.

In records James is often listed as James Ralston, Esq. But he was not a lawyer. In January, 1808, when James was admitted to the Franklin Debating Society, which held some of its meetings in the Wolf Academy, those records list him as Captain James Ralston. But we have no record of any military service.

James Ralston, Esq. was twice appointed a Justice of the Peace. In 1796, Gov Mifflin named him a justice for the borough of Easton. In 1823, Gov. Hiester approved him as a justice for Allen and Lehigh Townships. His commission papers are located in the Northampton County Courthouse.

Marriage

James did marry in April, 1804. His wife Elizabeth (or Eliza) Palmer was the daughter of George Palmer, the deputy surveyor of Northampton County. In the newspaper marriage notice, he is called Esquire. Tragically, Elizabeth died less than four years later in February, 1808, age 28, after a long and distressing illness; she is buried in the Horner Cemetery. They did not have any children.

In 1810 after Elizabeth's death, James lived alone in Allen Township.

Political Career

The following year James was elected to the Pennsylvania State Senate representing Lehigh, Northampton, and Wayne counties as a Democratic/Republican. He served two terms, 1811-1814. During his political career, in 1812 James declined the honor of an appointment as an Infantry Captain in the US Army.

Laying Out Bath

In 1816 and 1817, James purchased two tracts of land from Elizabeth Lattimore and William Lattimore in Allen Township and one parcel from Daniel Steckel in Mayfield [Bath]. He laid out the town of Bath and created "Ralston's General Draft for the Division of his Property". Between 1816 and 1824, James sold 18 lots.

Death and Estate

James died on January 10, 1836 "in the 69th year of his age." He was buried in the Horner Cemetery. James did not have a will. The inventory of his estate states that he lived in the village of Bath in the township of Allen, and lists a stove, bed, table, desk, map of the Salt Works, arm chair, and a set of books as his only assets. All of his possessions were sold for \$15.95.

James still owned land in Bath and this land was sold by his executor, mostly at Sheriff sales, to cover his debts. The sale records describe James as a yeoman.



Photo by Tim Gruber.

Legacy

When James died, 100 years after his grandfather arrived in America, he was the last Ralston male living in the township. Unlike his grandfather and father, who prospered as farmers, James followed a different path. Although he received a sizable inheritance, as an adult he had financial difficulties. Despite this, he is remembered today as the builder of a grand home and as the real estate developer who laid out and promoted the town of Bath.

Membership in the Governor Wolf Historical Society is by the calendar year!
We are an all volunteer Society and need your support.
Now is the time to join or renew for 2022!

**GOVERNOR WOLF HISTORICAL SOCIETY
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

You can help preserve our community's rich cultural heritage by becoming a member of the Governor Wolf Historical Society! Please return this application with a check payable to Governor Wolf Historical Society. If family, please include all names. Mail to: Governor Wolf Historical Society, P.O. Box 134, Bath PA 18014.

Individual \$25.00; Family \$40.00; Student \$10.00
Restoration \$75.00; Monocacy \$100.00
Governor's Guild \$200.00
Individual Lifetime \$500.00
Senior Lifetime (62+years) \$250.00

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE _____

E-MAIL _____

Save the Date for November/December Activities

Full details will be available in the November newsletter



Wreath Classes

Make a large fresh holiday wreath for your home
All supplies are furnished
Cost is \$30
4 sessions to choose from:
Saturday, November 26 — 9-11 a.m. or 1-3 p.m.
Sunday, November 27 — 1-3 p.m.
Monday, November 28 — 6-8 p.m.



**40th Governor Wolf Historical
Society's Christmas House Tour
December 3**



Can you believe it? The society is about to offer the fortieth edition of our tours, highlighting the wonderful historical architecture of buildings in and around Bath.

This year, kick off your holiday season with the magic of greens and bows, lit candles and crackling fires, chamber music and scents of bayberry and cinnamon. Our theme this year will be "Christmas Dinner."

Mark your calendar for Saturday, December 3, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and celebrate with family and friends.



Holiday History Fest

Saturday, December 3 — 9 a.m. to 4 p.n.
Sunday, December 4 — 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Our three historic buildings will be filled with activities for the entire family. See historical demonstrators, watch hearth cooking, learn about herb lore, create make-n-take crafts for both adults and children, and enjoy museum presentations. Craftsmen and craftswomen will offer quality crafts for sale. Snacks and lunch by The Daily Grind.



New Year's Eve Party

Saturday, December 31 — 8:30 p.m. to 12:30 a.m.

Bring in 2023 with a great mix of live music! Party and dance away 2022! Linen candle lit tables for two, four, and larger parties. Make reservations early. Large charcuterie buffet and soft drinks, hats, noisemakers and a continental breakfast. BYOB. Cost is \$45 per person, \$40 for members.





*The Governor's
Gossip*

GOVERNOR WOLF HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P. O. BOX 134
BATH, PA 18014

Return Service Requested

Upcoming Events

August 13 — Trip to Keith House — see page 1

August 20 — Free Open House and Museum Tours, 1-3 p.m.

August 21 — Annual Picnic, Noon-4 p.m. — see page 1

September 9 — Tavern Night, 7-10 p.m. — see page 1

September 13 — Monthly Meeting, 6:30 p.m. — see page 2

September 17 — Free Open House and Museum Tours, 1-3 p.m.

September 18 — Autumn Tea, 2-4 p.m. — see page 1

October 11 — Monthly Meeting, 6:30 p.m.

October 14 — Tavern Night, 7-10 p.m.— see page 1

October 15 — Free Open House and Museum Tours, 1-3 p.m.