



The Governor's Gossip

August 2025
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**Newsletter of the Governor Wolf Historical Society,
Owner of the Wolf Academy Historic Site, East Allen Township**

State Rep. Zach Mako To Attend GWHS September 9 Meeting

The Governor Wolf Historical Society is pleased to announce that State Representative Zach Mako will attend our September 9 meeting. His remarks will focus on topics of interest to our organization, such as state funding sources available to historical societies, regulation that might affect us, and state historical designations.

This will also be an opportunity for the Society to share our goals, challenges, and upcoming initiatives with our state legislator.

Rep. Mako's 183rd district includes Allen, East Allen, Lehigh and Moore townships, the boroughs of Bath, North Catasauqua, Northampton, and Walnutport in Northampton County and Lowhill, North Whitehall and Slatington in Lehigh County.

The meeting will start at 6:30 p.m.. The public is invited and refreshments will be served.



Fall Tea Set for October 19 Attend with "The Apples of Your Eye"

Gather your friends! Bring a date! It's time for another of our sell-out Wolf Teas! We are celebrating great friends, who are "The Apples of Your Eye" on Sunday, October 19 from 2 to 4 p.m. The event will be held in the Society's beautiful, historic, stone 1785 Allen Township Academy (now known as the Wolf Academy). Academy doors open at 1:45 p.m.

Tap your feet and sing along to fun German music about friends and friendship! Bring your favorite teacup! Enjoy beautiful table settings, delicious served tea sandwiches, and then, our famous 16 foot double-sided dessert and pastry buffet! There will be prizes, great raffle baskets, a gift for everyone. Let us know if you are celebrating a birthday.

Come early to visit the museum before the tea and see the 1800s documents that Gov. George Wolf signed while in office, and many items from the 1800s in a one room school setting. For your favorite youngsters, purchase a school slate with cursive lessons and chalk. Museum doors open at 1 p.m.

Our teas always sell out! Please gather your group, and call 610-905-0007 as soon as possible. You must clearly leave your full name and phone number and the total number of attendees in your group.



Dessert and pastry buffet.

Open House Dates – Free Guided Tours September 20, October 18, November 15

The Governor Wolf full site will be open for visitors the third Saturday of September, October and November from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. for free guided tours. No reservations are needed!

In our museum you can watch a short video explaining the life of George Wolf, the local boy who became governor 1829-1835 and see original documents from his tenure. Explore the material culture of the Scots Irish and Pennsylvania Germans and learn about early education. Tour our three historic buildings — the 1785 Academy, 1795 Ralston-McKeen House, and 1867 Monocacy School. Wander through the Herb and Pleasure Garden.

Crafts Social!

Gov. Wolf Historical Society hosts crafters on the first and third Thursdays of each month in the meeting room of the Monocacy School. Everyone is welcome to attend and work on whatever craft you desire. Bring your project, supplies, a drink and perhaps a snack and prepare for good conversation and a productive two hours. No registration is needed. A \$5 donation to the society is requested to defray facility costs.

Governor Wolf Historical Society

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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 before the 1st of the publication month. However the Society reserves the right to select and edit all content.

Thank You!

- To Lucienne Hosford for the donation of additional plates for our dinner china
- To Robert Swan and Abby Spencer for lawn mowing

Save The Dates For Our Holiday Events

Wreath Workshops — Nov. 29 and 30
Candlelight House Tour — Dec. 5
Christmas House Tour — Dec. 6
Holiday History Fest — Dec. 6 and 7
Holiday Concert — Dec. 14

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.

We Want 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 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. There is plenty of parking in the adjacent grassy meadow. For more information about rental opportunities, please contact Abby Spencer at spencerabby@yahoo.com or 610-428-3975.

Group Tours

Groups of all kinds — educators, Scouts, 4-H, schools, seniors, historical, crafters, gardeners, families — looking for a fun, informative morning or afternoon outing, please contact us! We have a variety of programs, activities, and presentations about our historic site and gardens to choose from, or we can customize one just for you!

We have entertained and informed groups from other states as well as our local community. This is a site that impacted all of Pennsylvania, since George Wolf, our seventh governor and the Father of Pennsylvania Public Education, spent his formative years as a student and teacher at the Wolf Academy. Call 610-837-9015 or email gwhs1958@gmail.com to discuss what we can do for you!

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. You can join online at www.govwolf.org or use this form. Make checks payable to Governor Wolf Historical Society. For a family membership, please include all names. Mail to: Governor Wolf Historical Society, P.O. Box 134, Bath PA 18014. Membership is by the calendar year.

Membership categories: 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

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From Our President

Greetings fellow historians,

As the summer comes to a close, we look forward to the crisp air and the warm colors of autumn. We here at GWHS will be preparing for our upcoming fall events. We hope to see you at some of them.

Our twice yearly "Teas" have become enormously popular, and always a sell-out. We anticipate that our October Tea will be the same. See the information for the Tea on page 1.

November will bring the popular fresh Wreath Making classes, and then on to our longest running event, the December Christmas House Tour, and its accompanying Holiday History Fest, which will fill all our buildings with

holiday vendors and crafters.

All money raised by our memberships and events goes toward the maintenance and restoration of our buildings and site. We welcome volunteers, and hope you will consider helping in one of our future events.

Kathy

Recent Events

Trip to Historic Trappe, PA



Society members enjoyed guided tours of the Dewees Tavern and the Center for Pennsylvania German Studies, the Muhlenberg House, and the Speakers House (shown above) during a day trip to Historic Trappe, PA on August 12. Thanks to Annette Vliet for arranging this event. Photo by Barb Wiemann.

Annual Dinner



Kirk Brown provided an entertaining and informative talk about formal gardens in Pennsylvania during the annual dinner on May 16. Attendees feasted on a delicious meal from Blacina's Café and Catering. Thanks to Linda Kortz and Abby Spencer for organizing this event. Photo by Kathy Wilhelm.

Passport to History Day at GWHS

A delighted young man displays the punched tin wall sconce that he created during Passport to History Day on June 28.

The Society offered a variety of make and take crafts, demonstrations, and tours during this annual event.

Thanks to Annette Vliet and Linda Kortz for organizing this event. Photo by Sharon Fournier.



Bath Silk Mill (continued from page 4)

Northampton, Nazareth and Bethlehem assisted the Bath department. By pumping water from the Monocacy Creek 200 yards away, the Pocono Iron Works on the west side of Chestnut Street and neighboring houses on the east side of Chestnut were saved. The only casualty was the German Shepherd dog kept at the mill.

Impact on Community

The loss to the community was enormous. Over 100 employees were out of work in a borough of 1,600 people. Bath borough council passed a resolution of regret at the loss of the business and agreed to exempt the mill from taxation for five years if they rebuilt. They also offered to provide any assistance needed for rebuilding.

Superintendent Diehl moved out of town with his family. His departure was keenly felt.

The mill was never rebuilt. The final contribution of the BSC to Bath occurred in 1937 when the large siren from the mill was installed on the town hall to announce emergency fire calls.

Return Service Requested

The Bath Silk Mill, 1899-1928

In October 1897 the Lyons Silk Company of Jersey City, NJ, purchased land in Bath and East Allen Township on the east side of Chestnut Street for \$16,000 and operated a silk mill. Within a year, in September, 1898, the Company sold the property, with all machinery and goods, to Frederick Rose of Passaic, NJ, for \$16,300. Four months later, in January, 1899, Rose conveyed the property to William Odenwelder, Lewis Groner, and James Berlin of Bath, joint tenants, for \$1; the purchasers did not assume any mortgage liabilities. The mill was now locally owned by the Bath Silk Company (BSC) and renamed the Bath Silk Mill (BSM).

BSM Expands

The Bath Silk Company prospered, expanding and modernizing the business. In 1912, when the Company replaced their smaller looms with larger, more modern, looms, BSC advertised for more employees "who want to work." The next year BSC installed 14 more new modern looms to augment their "already well equipped plant." The Morning Call reported that the company had many orders and was doing a brisk business.

Two years later, BSC had its largest payroll to date and was operating overtime. The old boiler house was dismantled and a new heating plant constructed. A new stack and out buildings were added. The factory converted to electrical power. A February 1916 article on the state of the silk industry noted that despite the difficulties obtaining dyes and the more than doubling of the price of raw silk, mills were expanding; as an example, the article cited the BSC's extensive completed expansion.

In July 1919, the Morning Call reported the BSC was operating at top notch speed, employing more people than ever, and production was ahead of previous records. To meet demand, BSC converted an old building to house "quite a number of large looms." Ever moving forward, in August 1927, the BSC contracted with the Catasauqua Brick Yard for 200,000 bricks for its next modernization. In 30 years of operation, the mill was never idle.

BSM in the Community

The establishment of this silk mill marked a significant industrial development for the area. Other industrial concerns, such as the cement and slate industries, employed men. But the Bath Silk Mill offered large numbers of women paid work outside the home. And the company strove to be an important component to the community.

In 1912, for "Old Home Week", the BSM entered a float in the parade. It featured a bevy of girls at their looms and a large mulberry tree. As a good neighbor, the company graded its spacious lot adjoining the mill, sowed grass seed, and planted twelve elm trees.

Because many of its employees lacked transportation and would have to walk, the BSC operated passenger trucks. One of the cherished traditions was the distribution of a large box of fine candies to all employees at Christmas.

Byron D. Diehl

The style of an organization begins with management and in that respect the BSM was fortunate to have Byron D. Diehl serve as mill superintendent for 15 years. Not only did Diehl continuously improve and modernize the factory to keep it competitive, he was admired and respected by his employees. He immersed himself in the life of the town. He was elected to the borough council and became president of the council. Diehl was an elder and secretary at Christ Reformed Church, member of the Green Mount Cemetery board, and belonged to many of the civic organizations in town.

To entice Diehl to remain in Bath as superintendent, in 1916 the BSC constructed "a fine dwelling" on the south corner of their property on Chestnut Street for him. As an example of the employee attitude toward Diehl, at Christmas, 1926, a committee of ladies presented him a surprise gift of a large turkey, a silk shirt and tie, and a wallet with cash.

Destroyed by Fire

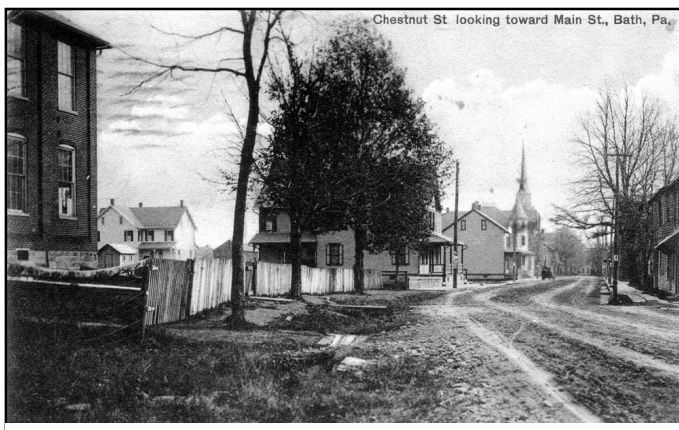
Fire was a constant threat in silk mills and the BSM was no exception.

The Morning Call reported that a BSM fire in 1910 resulted in seven lawsuits against six insurance companies as the BSC disputed the losses it sustained and the insurance payments.

Ten years later, the night watchman discovered a blaze on the second floor of the factory. He sounded the alarm and nearby residents fought the blaze until the fire department arrived. Fortunately, damage was slight. The cause was determined to be crossed wires which burned out a motor.

However, a devastating fire of unknown origin on February 14, 1928, destroyed the mill. The night watchman discovered the second floor blaze near a stairwell, sounded the alarm, but the fire could not be contained. The two-story, 150 by 80 foot structure, with its 100 broad silk looms, was a \$100,000 loss. Fire companies from

(Continued on page 3)



Corner of Bath Silk Mill on left. Photo courtesy of Carol Bear