



The Governor's Gossip

May 2026
v. 44, no. 2

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

Explore Local History During Our Free Events

New!! Third Saturday Speaker Series

On the third Saturday of each month, while the Wolf Academy Historic Site is open for tours, we have added a wonderful new event – Saturday Afternoon Speakers. From 1:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. in the Wolf Academy, you can sit, have some refreshments, and hear local experts speak on many different historical subjects, customs, and 1800s life. The talks are free.

We kicked off the talks in April with a presentation by Gary Weaver, who arrived in full Civil War dress and spoke about the fire-arms of that period and this county. His display of period weapons and accoutrements was fascinating!

Upcoming Presentations May 16 - Time and Keys

On May 16, the talk about antique clocks and timepieces is titled “Time and Keys.” Do you have a clock that isn’t working? Do you want to know when great grandpa’s watch was made? Join us to learn about horology (the study of timepieces and clocks) and see the display of clocks from this area.



June 20 - Herbs in Early Gardens



On June 20, our theme will be “Herbs in Early Gardens.” Can you recognize plants by their smell, color, or plant structure? Before pills, how did great grandma treat gout, croup, and indigestion? Come learn about the plants our ancestors grew to enhance their health, season their recipes, and enhance their lives.

July 18 - Bees and Honey

On July 18, you can expect a sweet talk about “Bees and Honey.” Learn about the vital role of bees in pollinating crops and flowers. How do local beekeepers manage their hives while avoiding colony collapse? How do bees make honey? As a bonus, you can sample some tasty sweet goodies!



Check the Society’s website for future talks that will be scheduled on the third Saturday of each month through October.

Passport to History - June 27

The Governor Wolf Historical Society will join other historical groups from around the greater Lehigh Valley to celebrate Passport to History Day on Saturday, June 27, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. This is a great free event and is perfect for adults, families and youth groups.

Our historic site will be filled with things to see, watch and do, such as blacksmithing, hearth cooking, woodworking, colonial games, and really neat crafts to make and take. Since the crafts were such a total hit last year, we are offering free crafts for adults as well as kids.



Photo by Sharon Fournier

Lehigh Valley Passport to History is a partnership of more than 75 historic sites and resources in nine counties in and around Lehigh and Northampton counties. Passport’s website, <https://lvhistory.org> highlights historical activities, events, tours and exhibitions through the Valley. Website visitors can sign up for Passport’s email newsletter covering upcoming events.

Stop in and see what our historic site has to offer!

Free Historic Site Tours May 16, June 20, July 18, August 15 1 to 3 p.m.

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.

Request A Tour

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

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 our members and the public by the Society. Contributions are encouraged and may be sent to the editor before the first day of the publication month. However the Society reserves the right to select and edit all content.



On April 13th, volunteers began the spring clean up the The Herb and Pleasure Garden. Pruning, raking, clipping, weeding, edging, and debris removal were among the many tasks accomplished. Photo by Linda Kortz.

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!

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.

Become A Member

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE _____

E-MAIL _____

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

Volunteer!!

Our Society is an all volunteer group. Volunteers do everything from greeting people at events to maintaining our historic site. To make a difference in your local community, speak to one of our Board members, call 610-837-9015, or email gwhs1958@gmail.com

Thank You!!

- To **Kathy Silfies** for the donation of a printer
- To the Master Gardeners under the leadership of **Patti Corey**, for providing expertise to help the Society maintain our Herb and Pleasure Garden

From Our President



Hello everyone!

Spring greetings! This year has been fantastic at the GWHS Campus.

I want to thank everyone involved in making our Annual Dinner a success! Dr. Scott Paul Gordon was our guest speaker and gave a wonderful presentation on "Moravians and the American Revolution."

I am also excited to announce that the campus parking lot has been newly paved! With fundraising efforts and a matching grant from Northampton County, these much-needed improvements have greatly enhanced the area.

In addition, we will be adding a beautiful brick walkway leading to the Ralston-McKeen House, thanks to Lukas Yencha (Troop 40) and his Eagle Scout Service Project.

Let's not forget our Open House Site Tours on the third Saturday of each month, featuring a lecture series from 1:30 – 2:30 p.m! You can find more information in this newsletter.

Bob Byshe

August Trip

Each August, the Society plans an excursion to an historical site. These educational ventures allow us to learn local history from passionate historians and see the work that other historical societies are accomplishing. In the last few years, we have visited diverse sites such as Historic Trappe, the state capitol in Harrisburg, Jim Thorpe, and the Keith House in Horsham, PA.

We carpool to the site and enjoy lunch (Dutch treat) at a local inn or tavern.

Plans for this year's annual excursion have not been finalized yet. But watch for the announcements on our website, Facebook page, and email. Sign up for a memorable day trip!.

Parking Lot Paving Project



The Gov. Wolf Historical Society is so excited to realize our long desired dream to repave our driveways and parking lot. Thanks to the Society's fund raising efforts and a matching 2025 Grow NORCO Grant from Northampton County, we now have a properly graded lot which will allow water to drain away from the Monocacy School. No more pot holes, uneven pavement, and puddles to endanger and aggravate our visitors. The entrance and exit driveways are clearly marked and parking spots are neatly lined so that traffic flow will proceed in an orderly and safe fashion

As part of the project, the Society was able to create planting beds around the building. Native species of shrubs have been added and the plantings mulched. For safety, lighting will be added at the corners of the building (the dirt area in the photo above).

Thanks to **Abby Spencer** for writing the successful grant application and **Darrin Heckman** for supervising the paving project.

Photos by Barb Wiemann



Craft Social Open to All 1st & 3rd Thursdays

By Carol Bear

Remember that half-finished knitted scarf in the spare bedroom? Or the art project you never finished? This is your chance! Join like-minded people in the meeting room at the Society and get it done! We meet twice a month, the first and third Thursdays from 10 a.m. to noon. Everyone is welcome. Personally, I have completed four unfinished projects that had been gathering dust in my home! Hope to see you there. A \$5 donation to GW is welcome to offset utility costs.

New Board Member

Jennifer George has joined the Society Board of Directors, replacing Melina Nye, who resigned due to family obligations. A resident of Bath, Jenn previously assisted with our House Tours by recruiting House Tour sponsors.

Community groups, Scouts, teachers, garden clubs! Plan a fun talk and tour! Free light snacks and drinks. Call 610-837-9015 and clearly leave yur name and number.

Last Quarter's Events

Antiques Show



The 17th annual Antiques Show was another successful event! The number of attendees was the most ever! Visitors came from 18 Pennsylvania counties, 10 New Jersey counties, and New York, Connecticut and Delaware. We had every room in every building filled and even had one vendor in the café. The Sunday talk was held in the Ralston McKeen House hearth room and Kathy Wilhelm dazzled the audience with her hearth cooking knowledge.

The weather was beautiful and we had a wonderful weekend. Customers and vendors alike were all pleased and already looking forward to the 18th annual event next March 6 and 7!

Thank you to **Carol Bear** for organizing the Antiques Show and **Kathy Silfies** for running the Café. Photo by Carol Bear.

Annual Dinner



Dr. Scott Paul Gordon presented a fascinating talk on "Moravians and the American Revolution" at the Society's annual dinner on May 1. The lecture highlighted the legal problems and physical difficulties that Moravians in Bethlehem endured as a consequence of their religious views. The presentation was a perfect subject as we celebrate America 250.

The buffet dinner by Cathy's Creative Catering and the wide variety of desserts were delicious. Thank you to **Abby Spencer** for organizing the dinner and **Bob Bysher** for providing the projector and sound system. Photo by Annette Vliet.

Spring Tea



The Wolf Academy was filled with laughter, music, happy conversations, and good food during the Society's Spring Tea. The 16-foot dessert table in the center of the room impressed everyone. Thank you to **Linda Kortz** for organizing the Tea. Photo by Barb Wiemann.

Revolutionary Connections... *(Continued from page 6)*

Horner Cemetery



Photo from Facebook page

Members of the Allen Township Presbyterian Church established this burial ground in 1745. Burials include Revolutionary War veterans such as Robert Brown, John Craig, Thomas Craig and John Ralston. The cemetery, located at 4955 Nor-Bath Blvd. behind God's Missionary Church, is not visible from the road. The cemetery is open Monday thru Saturday during daylight hours and Sunday from 1 to 5 p.m.

Henry Bartholomew and John Snyder, Wagon Masters

Not all patriots served with a gun. Local residents are familiar with the stirring saga of transporting the Liberty Bell to Allentown in September 1777. But the bell wagon was just one wagon in a convoy that evacuated the colonial government from Philadelphia before the city was occupied by the British. Henry Bartholomew and John Snyder, Pennsylvania German farmers and neighbors on Snyder Church Road, answered the call for experienced wagoners. Their assignment was to haul the Pennsylvania Supreme Executive Council's money and valuable papers to Easton. Today, the Bartholomew and Snyder homes are still occupied and stand as a reminder of their roles in saving Pennsylvania's government. *(Continued on page 5)*



The Lamson/Dixon Pencil Sharpener (circa 1885)

By Robert Bysher

I'd like to talk about an exciting piece of history that recently made its way to my studio. It's considered one of the first mechanical pencil sharpeners commercially made in America. I'm speaking of the elusive Lamson / Dixon Pencil Sharpener. Some refer to it as "The Lamson Pencil Sharpener" and others call it "Dixon's Pencil Sharpener". So, which one is correct? Well...before I answer that, let's take a closer look at the sharpener itself.

The Sharpener

I was fortunate to receive this example with its original shipping box, which gives us a lot of useful information. Dixon advertised that it could sharpen 60 pencils in five minutes, making it ideal for schools, draftsmen, and office work.

The sharpener's ornamental framework is cast iron, finished and hand-painted with decorative flourishes — meaning no two units were exactly alike. The crank gears are non-magnetic, most likely an alloy composition, with the larger gear being painted in a gold finish. The dual pencil guide includes multiple hole sizes to accommodate different pencil diameters and ensures the pencil stays perfectly straight in the cutters.

Original accessories included a set of wooden "clearers" for removing clogs, and a bottle of Dixon Oil for lubricating the bearings.

The Inventor

Warren Harrison Lamson was born in 1846 in Worcester County, Massachusetts. He developed an early interest in penmanship and went on to study at various institutions, including the New England Conservatory School of Fine Arts.

Lamson began as a teacher of penmanship in New York City and later worked as a publisher of schoolbooks. By the 1880s he was established in Lynn, Massachusetts, serving as the special instructor



of drawing and penmanship. During that time, he invented, and patented several devices, including a pen-holding guide, pen staff and hand support, a writing and drawing book, and two pencil sharpeners — one mechanical and one handheld.

The Joseph Dixon Crucible Company

The Joseph Dixon Crucible Company was an industrial powerhouse. Dixon formally established his business in 1827 in Salem, Massachusetts, initially focused on graphite processing and crucible manufacturing. The success of his heat-resistant crucibles — especially during the Mexican American War — prompted Dixon to expand.

In 1847, Dixon moved his business to Jersey City, New Jersey, for its location and marketing potential. By the 1860s, the Civil War created a huge demand for clean, portable writing tools and Dixon's pencils finally found their moment.

Dixon developed machinery capable of producing 132 pencils per minute, and by the early 1870s the company was the world's largest producer and consumer of graphite, manufacturing 86,000 pencils per day.

So... is it a Lamson or Dixon?

Lamson's original patent lists no assignees, which strongly suggests Dixon licensed the design. Dixon advertised it as "Dixon's Pencil Sharpener," manufactured under the Lamson patent. Lamson's name remained on the product, whether for marketing value or as part of the licensing agreement. So, what is the correct name? The answer is... they are both correct.

And if you ever manage to get your hands on a Lamson or Dixon Pencil Sharpener, know that you're in possession of one of the earliest and most unique artifacts in the history of mechanical pencil sharpening

If you would like to watch the documentary I created for this, please type the following link in your web browser address bar: <https://tinyurl.com/lamson-dixon>

Revolutionary Connections *(Continued from page 4)*

Rev. John Rosbrugh, "Clerical Martyr"

Rev. John Rosbrugh was born in Ireland and emigrated to New Jersey. He graduated from Princeton College in 1761; in 1769 he accepted a call from the Allen Township Presbyterian Church and moved to the township in 1770.

After Washington's defeat in New York in November, 1776 (see Robert Brown on page 6), as the army retreated across New Jersey, the General sent out an urgent appeal for reinforcements. Rev Rosbrugh read Washington's letter to his congregation and then preached his sermon, using as his text Judges 5:23. He urged them to respond and offered to accompany the company as their chaplain. However, the men insisted that he be the commanding officer.

The next day the men assembled and marched off to Philadelphia, arriving on December 24, too late to be included in the famous Christmas Day crossing of the Delaware and the victory at Trenton. On December 26, Rosbrugh's role changed, as the Council of Safety commissioned him Chaplain of the 3rd Battalion of Northampton

County militia. John Hays became captain of Rosbrugh's troop.

When the American army re-crossed into New Jersey on December 30, the Northampton County men joined the campaign. Rev. Rosbrugh was killed on January 2, 1777 during the Battle of Asunpink Creek. He became separated from the militia. Despite his status as a chaplain and surrendering when surrounded, he was bayoneted to death. Rosbrugh was 63 years old and survived by his wife and five children under the age of ten years.



Rev. Rosbrugh's home on Nor-Bath Blvd., in a small hollow just to the west of the warehouse, is still occupied. The Allen Township church where he preached was located to the east of God's Missionary Church and torn down when the current church was built in 1813.

The lectern that Rosbrugh used to preach his last sermon is on display at the Northampton County Historical and Genealogical Society in Easton.

Return Service Requested

Upcoming Events!!

*Monthly Lecture Series -- 3rd Saturdays
see page 1*

*Crafts Social -- 1st & 3rd Thursdays
see page 3*

*Open House Tours -- 3rd Saturdays
see page 1*

*Passport to History -- June 27
see page 1*

*August Field Trip -- details to be announced
see page 3*

East Allen Township's Revolutionary Connections

No battles were fought in our township during the Revolutionary War, 1775-1783. However, township residents were involved in the war and there are township locations with connections to the war. Here are some short pieces about a few of those people and locations. All sites mentioned, except the Horner Cemetery, are privately owned.

Andrew Allen, Loyalist

Although he did not live here, Andrew Allen was the largest landowner in East Allen at the start of the Revolution, having received much of a 5,000 acre tract that his father William Allen had acquired in 1732. Allen initially favored the colonial cause and represented Pennsylvania in the Second Continental Congress until June 14, 1776. As a wealthy landowner, he resisted radical change and swore allegiance to Great Britain in December 1776. Allen sailed to England in 1778. The Pennsylvania colonial government seized his real estate and sold it to fund their operations. One block of Allen's land was bounded on the north and south by Bath and Locust Road and by Airport Road and Township Line Road on the west and east.



Robert Brown, Soldier and Prisoner

Robert Brown joined the Pennsylvania Battalion of the Flying Camp as a lieutenant in July 1776. He was taken prisoner at Fort Washington, NY, on November 16, 1776, during one of the worst Patriot defeats of the war. While a prisoner, thanks to the trade his father demanded he learn, Brown was able to make extra money,

which he used to buy bread for his men. He remained in custody until exchanged in a prisoner swap on January 25, 1781. After his return, he was given the rank of general in the state militia.

However, Brown is remembered not for his military service, but for the horse chestnut tree, a gift from George Washington, that he planted at his home on Airport Road north of Nor-Bath Blvd.. The tree, known as the Friendship Tree, became a symbol for both Bath and East Allen Township. By 1920 the tree was 80 feet tall and, thanks to promotion efforts of Asa McIlhaney and others, was one of the most famous trees in America. The tree died in 1953.



Neigel Gray, Soldier and Committeeman

In May 1775, when the county Committee of Observation ordered male residents to join the Associators (militia), Neigel Gray was elected captain of the 120 Allen Township men who signed up. In May 1776, as his talents were recognized, he was elected to serve on the county Committee, and then appointed to represent the county at the Philadelphia meeting that decided county quotas for the new state Flying Camp. In September 1776, Gray joined the 12th Pennsylvania Regiment as a Lieutenant Colonel, the second highest rank in the regiment and served until June 1778.

(Continued on page 4)