



The Governor's Gossip

November 2025
v. 43, no. 4

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

Two Great Events in One Weekend!

43rd Annual House Tour December 6, 10 a.m - 4 p.m.

The 43rd edition of our famous Christmas House Tour will be a memorable one. The homes, all more than 120 years old, are located in Lower Nazareth Township and Bethlehem. They reflect different architectural styles and were originally built for varying purposes. From an abandoned shell in the middle of a corn field to a sturdy 1700s stone barn, they have each evolved into warm, inviting dwellings through someone's creative vision and energy. The owners of these outstanding and unique homes invite you to visit this holiday season and celebrate the rich architecture and heritage of our area. Sketches and thumbnail descriptions of each home on this year's tour are on page 4.

In addition, two museums, two 18th century building owned by the Society, and an almost 170 year old one room school are included on the tour.

Our theme this year is "O Tannenbaum." Immerse yourself in the spirit of the season and bring back memories of Christmas past as you look for creatively decorated trees. Florists and garden clubs will again provide Christmas decorative accents both inside and out.

Advance Ticket Purchase Outlets

As a courtesy to our venders, please pay with exact cash or check.

Bath Drug Pharmacy, 310 S. Walnut St., Bath, PA 18014

S Seem Antiques, 100 S. Chestnut St., Bath, PA 18014

Snow Goose Gallery, 470 Main St., Bethlehem, PA 18018

Mycalyn Florals, 30 S. Main St., Nazareth, PA 18064

Miller Supply ACE Hardware, Rt. 329 & Savage Rd.,
Northampton, PA 18067

Advance purchase tickets go on sale on Saturday, November 16, at five local merchants; price is \$30 in advance or \$35 at the Monocacy School on tour day. As a bonus, the House Tour ticket includes admission to both days of the Holiday History Fest.

**Friday evening Patron Tour information
is on page 4**

Holiday History Fest — December 6 & 7

Every room in all three historic buildings on our Wolf Academy Historic Site will be filled with juried crafts, artisans, and historic experts demonstrating or explaining what and how! Ladies in their



1800s dresses will share free holiday treats in the Ralston-McKeen parlor. In another room full of Civil War artifacts from Northampton County's 153rd Regiment, a uniformed Civil War re-enactor soldier will explain the items and equipment. Demonstrations include hearth cooking, a woodworker, an entire 1800s school room filled with fiber artists engaged in spinning, weaving and making lace, and an early fire arms expert.

Juried, quality gifts to purchase, all from local sources, include honey and products from a bee expert; 20 kinds of jams from a "Jelly Queen" who will offer sample tastings; pastries and gluten free sour dough breads; unique handcrafted baskets, and more.

We will offer free crafts for all ages. Make a bird feeder, a dried herbal wreath, a tin pinched ornament, a German candy filled cone and more! In our museum, watch our video presentation and learn about the local boy who became our 7th Governor. You can have your photo taken in an old school setting - we even have a dunce hat if you are brave.

There is easy, free parking, warm fires in our blazing hearths, and lots to watch and sample! Join us for a fun family and friends day! Donation is \$6.00, \$5.00 for members. Children under 10 and Scouts in uniform are free. Hours are 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday and 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday.

Monocacy School Café

The Society will be selling delicious food and beverages in our historic 1922 school room on Saturday and Sunday. Lunch and snack options will be available.

Governor Wolf Historical Society

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East Allen Township
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Bath, PA 18014
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Email: gwhs1958@gmail.com
Website: www.govwolf.org

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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!

Just in time for the America 250 celebration in 2026, Abby Spencer has donated a framed copy of a 1776 map titled "The Provinces of New York, and New Jersey; with part of Pensilvania, and the Province of Quebec." Drawn by Major Holland for the British, it includes a detailed map of New York City and is considered the most accurate map then available. It was used by both armies during the Revolution. Look for the map during the House Tour and Holiday History Fest.

Save The Dates

17th Annual Antiques Show
March 7 & 8, 2026

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

NAME _____

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From Our President

Greetings Friends!

November and December are the busiest months of the year for the Historical Society. Our 43rd annual Christmas House Tour takes place on Saturday, December 6. We are showcasing two early homes in Lower Nazareth Township and three homes in Bethlehem, along with the GWHS's three historic buildings. The Bath Museum will be open for the tour, as well. Our site will be busy with crafters, vendors, and hearth cooking demonstrations for the Holiday History Fest, which takes place on December 6 and 7. Enjoy a morning coffee, or have lunch in our

Café.

See information about our popular wreath making classes and our Annual Holiday Concert.

We look forward to seeing you at our events!

Kathy

Annual Candlelight Concert

Celtic and Seasonal Music by Piper's Request — Dec. 14

Local trio Piper's Request will present an evening of Celtic and seasonal music in the candlelit Wolf Academy on Sunday, Dec. 14 at 7 p.m. The group offers lively traditional music from Ireland and Scotland that focuses on life, love, sorrow, and laughter. Traditional instruments include uilleann pipes, Irish flutes, mandolin, banjo, fiddle, and bodhran.

The evening includes a fabulous dessert buffet and light refreshments.

Seating is limited and advance purchase is recommended. Purchase tickets at the Society during the Holiday History Fest on December 6 and 7, or reserve tickets by email gwhs1958@gmail.com or by phone 610-737-3000.

If not sold out, tickets will be available at the door. Doors open at 6:30 p.m.

Price is \$15 for Society members and \$20 for non-members.



Piper's request - Terry Hartzell, Fred Gilmartin and Rick Weaver

Open House

November 15 — 1 to 3 p.m.

Free guided tours of the Society's three
historic buildings and museum

In Memorium: Norma Lopresti



Gov. Wolf Board member Norma (Hartzell) Lopresti, 73, died October 26. Despite health challenges, Norma remained committed to taking an active roll in Society events. She served as treasurer in 2024. She was always on the lookout for items needed for our teas and donated them. Norma had an infectious enthusiasm and can-do attitude. In President Wilhelm's assessment, Norma was a trooper and she will be sorely missed.

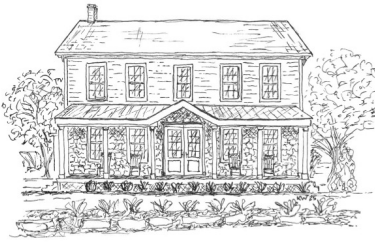
Norma is survived by her husband Wayne, who is also a GWHS Board member, two children, and three grandchildren. Her memorial service will be November 28 at 11 a.m. at the Bensing Funeral Home; calling hour from 10 to 11 a.m.

Rep. Mako Visits Gov. Wolf



State Representative Zach Mako examines a display in the Gov. Wolf museum during his visit on September 9. Mako explained state funding sources that might be helpful to the Society and answered questions. Photo by Barb Wiemann.

2025 House Tour Homes



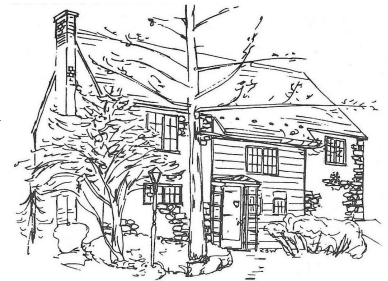
This Federal-Colonial home was likely built in the 1860s. The owners have worked to preserve and enhance its historic charm. Careful renovations have transformed the kitchen, family room, and two bathrooms, blending modern comfort with respect for the home's historic details.

This fieldstone farmhouse was built about 1800. During renovations, three stone fireplaces were uncovered beneath plaster walls. The mantles are repurposed barn beams. Of note is the attic architecture. Spot the outhouse that was placed out of service in 2024.



Constructed in the colonial revival style, this six bedroom, four bathroom home was the home of a Bethlehem Steel executive and was considered a mansion when built. It was the first home in the Edgeboro neighborhood. Note the Moravian tiles on the front porch and on the fireplace.

Greystone Barn was built about 1844 by the Heller family and was part of a large farm. In the 1930s, the Shields purchased the barn and turned it into a kindergarten and eventually their home. This hand-crafted structure reflects the design and construction that inspired the Arts and Crafts movement.



This Mid-Century Modern gem, over 120 years old, was built as a church parsonage. In the living room, all of the original casings, doors, baseboards, and fireplace have been preserved. The fireplace features rare Moravian Tile Works tile, and the original stained glass "piano window" remains. Original oak flooring runs throughout.

Patron Tickets For Friday Night Tour

The Friday, December 5, candlelight patron tour begins at 5:30 p.m. in the Society's Ralston-McKeen House. From there, tour participants caravan to the five open homes, following a pre-arranged schedule to visit each home. After touring the homes, everyone returns to the Ralston-McKeen House to enjoy refreshments.

The cost of the patron tour is \$50 for members and \$60 for non-members. Reservations are required. Send your name, phone number, email address, number of patron tickets, and a check made payable to "Gov. Wolf Historical Society" to Carol Bear, Candlelight Tour, 207 W. Northampton St., Bath PA 18014.

House Tour Sponsors

Platinum Sponsor

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176 Nazareth Pike, Bethlehem, PA 18020
610-759-9311

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Terraform Engineering
One East Broad St., Suite 330,
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Please support our sponsors

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100 South Chestnut St., Bath, PA 18014
610-390-0403

Spengler Brown Law Offices
110 East Main St., Bath, PA 18014
610-837-7855

History Mystery Object -- What Is This?

Siam Soo: the Oriental Dancer

By Bob Bysher

I was very fortunate to find and restore this unusual item. Her name is Siam Soo. I would best describe her as a *phonograph novelty item*. Some of the trade magazines from the early 1920's listed her as a "Dancing Figure" or an "Ornament – Not A Toy".

While I was in the process of restoration, I decided to do a little research to find out the origins of this unusual item.

Specifications

Siam Soo was made by the Morton E. Converse & Son Co. of Winchendon, Massachusetts and was sold exclusively by the Columbia Graphophone Co. Standing 11 ½" tall, she was the largest dancing figure ever made in America. Her wooden face is hand-painted making her truly unique and no two will be exactly alike. Her headdress is bright red and green with beautiful gold ornamentation. Her skirt, measuring 5 ½" deep, came in at least three different prints: a red and black buffalo plaid, a camel-colored that resembles burlap, and a beautiful colored paisley. The skirts are a simple rectangle with a white drawstring that ties around the figure's waist.

How It Works

This is where Siam Soo shines! She has a light-weight tin clip that positions over the phonograph's spindle. There is a 3 inch metal and rubber wheel which makes direct contact with the record label surface and turns as the record is playing. This wheel is connected to an inner wheel that provides movement to her waist. A rigid wire is also connected to the main wheel that allows her head to turn from side-to-side. Both elbows and shoulders are jointed and connected with a string that provides movement of the arms.



The Origins

Mrs. Florence Burgess Meehan, a member of the Bray Powell expedition, visited the palace of the King of Siam, where she saw many of the native dancers. In Cambodia the same dances were performed for her in the King's palace, and she became more interested in bringing this dancer to America. On reaching Java she found a Malayan boy who was able to make a very good reproduction of the dancing figure, carved out of wood, and this constitutes the origin of "Siam Soo."

The Controversy

Siam Soo would have been considered a controversial item back in the day. According to a publication in Talking Machine World (May 15, 1921), The E.M. Abbott Co had a Siam Soo on exhibition in the front window of its store in Chicago and it attracted such crowds that the police forced the vendor to move the display inside the store as the crowds were disrupting traffic.

The Music

Columbia had released a record entitled "Siam Soo" (A3379) recorded on February 8, 1921 by a group called "The Happy Six" to additionally promote the Siam Soo figure. The record, which originally sold for 85 cents for unknown reasons, is fairly rare today and perhaps even harder to find than the actual Siam Soo figure. I was very lucky to find an original record to complete my set.

Want to See Siam Soo In Action?

It would be a waste to write this article and not provide our readers with an actual demonstration. You can watch a video of Siam Soo dancing with the original record on your computer or mobile device by typing the following url into the address bar on your web browser: www.govwolf.org/siam-soo.mp4



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Photo by
KathyWil-
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The Apples of Your Eye Tea was a true celebration of great friends! The tea sandwiches and 16 foot pastry buffet made everyone happy! Thank you to door prize donors Katherine and Neil Coddington who donated a large gift basket and Kathy Silfies who donated a breakfast certificate at the Filbert Bed and Breakfast.

250 Years Ago

In 1776, Northampton County included all of the present day counties of Northampton, Lehigh, Monroe, Pike, Wayne, and Carbon, and a small slice of Schuylkill. There were 26 townships -10 in present-day Northampton, nine in Lehigh, five in Monroe, Pike and Wayne, and two in Carbon and Schuylkill.

East Allen Township was not created until 1845 and was part of Allen Township in 1776.

Allen Township included all of present day Allen, East Allen, Hanover (Lehigh) and Hanover (Northampton) townships, and the boroughs of Northampton, North Catasauqua, Catasauqua and Bath.

Today, this 42.25 square mile area has a population of almost 48,000 people. In 1779, the Allen Township tax list identified only 177 head of household taxable residents. That meant there were an average of 4.2 families per square mile. Only six individuals had a listed occupation - three weavers, one miller, one tanner, and one smith. Everyone else was primarily a farmer or farm laborer.

In 1775, when the county ordered eligible men to join the militia or face penalties, Allen Township mustered 120 men.

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

Return Service Requested



Photo by Linda Kortz

More Upcoming Events

*Open House Tour -- Nov. 15
see page 3*

*Christmas House Tour -- Dec. 6
see pages 1 & 4*

*Holiday History Fest -- Dec. 6 & 7
see page 1*

*Candlelight Concert -- Dec. 14
see page 3*



Annual Wreath Workshop Party

Saturday, November 29 — #1. 9:00 a.m. — Noon.
— #2. 1:00 p.m. — 4:00 p.m.
Sunday, November 30 — #3. 1:00 p.m. — 4:00 p.m.

All supplies provided to make a 22-inch wreath: wreath form, mixed greens, pine cones, and your choice of a large florist bow. Bring clip-pers, glue gun, and any other décor you want to add to your wreath.

Wine, snacks optional. Coffee and tea provided. Please arrive on time. We start promptly.

\$40
per person

Groups—Please list all names and pay with one check for group.

Name: _____ Phone _____

Email: _____ t _____ Number Attending _____

Address _____ City _____ Zip _____

Class date and time _____ Amount _____

Make check payable to GWHS. Add “Wreath Class” on memo line. Space reserved with receipt of check.
Information at www.govwolf.org

Call or text 610-905-0007 and leave phone number, name, class choice, and number in group.
Deadline to register is November 21.

Make check payable to: GWHS. Mail to: Linda Kortz, 1091 Copella Rd., Bath, PA 18014