There are some new additions to the Friends of the Joseph Priestley House Board in 2018: Angela Gockley and Laurie McCants.

Angela Gockley has taught chemistry since 1994 and, since 2006, has been teaching chemistry at Lewisburg Area High School. “I love how Priestley House reminds visitors that scientists don’t do their work in isolation as history unfolds, but that they are people living in society just as others do, subject to society’s attitudes when their work is at odds with prevailing sentiment – just as anyone is whose convictions may not go along with the status quo,” she noted. Angela is also excited about how Priestley House makes science so accessible to the general public. “I hope that its programs nurture young scientists and encourage them to make some science history of their own, never more important than now.” Angela lives in Lewisburg with her husband, Brian, and their cat, McGill.

Gunnpowder Joe is Laurie McCants’ most recent connection to Priestley House. Laurie directed the World Premiere of Anthony Clavaro’s play about Joseph Priestley. She is also a co-founder (1978) of the Bloomsburg Theatre Ensemble (BTE), where she co-created Hard Coal, Our Shadows (with Egypt’s Wamada), and Susquehanna: Mighty Muddy, Crooked River of the Long Reach. In 2010 she was named a national “Actor of Distinguished Achievement” through a Fox Foundation Resident Actor Fellowship, funded by the William and Eliza Fox Foundation and administered by Theatre Communications Group. Laurie also served as President of the Board of the National Network of Ensemble Theaters. Currently, she is preparing to revive her solo show, Industrious Angels, for a return run at the Ko Festival of Performance in Amherst, Massachusetts, in August 2018 and at BTE in January 2019.

**NEW BOARD MEMBERS: ANGELA GOCKLEY AND LAURIE MCCANTS**

**Postings from the Friends of Joseph Priestley House**

Greetings, Friends,

I am a new member living in the United Kingdom, which I imagine is somewhat unusual, but attempts to maintain a Priestley society here have not been very successful, and I have concluded that it would be better for Priestley enthusiasts to focus on one leading international society, which has to be FJPH.

By way of introduction, I have written below what information I have on a few Priestley-related sites in the UK: [Heckmondwike Old Hall, Thornhill Parish Church, Dewsbury; Sites linked to Mary Priestley (née Wilkinson) in Wrexham, Wales; Plaspower Hall; Bersham Ironworks; Brombo; and the Parish Church of Wrexham, St. Giles,] Heckmondwike Old Hall is the house where Priestley largely grew up. I last visited about a year ago, and it remains in good condition and [is] operating as a public house (tavern). There are various items alerting visitors to its historic significance. Business seemed to be good, which is fortunate as public houses are in steep decline in the UK now, due to the escalating price of liquor and the law forbidding smoking in enclosed public spaces. We can but hope that the business will continue to survive. Incidentally, they also serve food which is simple but good. Thornhill Parish Church, Dewsbury is a little to the south of Leeds, and it was the workplace of Rev. John Michell, an interesting researcher in gravity and magnetism. It is known that Priestley visited him. Sites linked to Mary Priestley (née Wilkinson) in Wrexham, Wales [is an area in which I worked] until recently and hence have a strong interest in it. The Wilkinson family lived at Plaspower Hall, but unfortunately that has been demolished. I envision Priestley paying regular visits from Nantwich, presumably by road coach. The important family business was Bersham Ironworks, and parts of that have been preserved, under the control of the local council. The ironworks contains some interesting relics and a small museum display, but it only opens by prior arrangement. Following a dispute within the Wilkinson family, the Bersham Ironworks was run down and a new and larger works was developed at Brombo, nearby, although this was commenced after Priestley had left for America. It continued to operate until the late 20th century, and some of the historic parts have been preserved and are now the subject of various preservation activities, with a more active team of volunteers than at Bersham. Under the laws of the time, Priestley and Mary had to get married in the (Episcopal) Parish Church of Wrexham, St. Giles, which remains in good preservation and is over 500 years old. It contains at least one memorial to one of the Wilkinson family, and, perhaps more notably, it has the tomb of Elihu Yale, founder of Yale University, in its grounds. (“Yale” is an Anglicised version of the Welsh word ël, the name of a district near Wrexham.)

[Finally,] a note about me. I was a professor at Bradford University, Yorkshire, when I started to include a particular interest in the history of science related to the local area and discovered the connection with Priestley. In particular, being an electrical engineering academic, I was fascinated by Priestley’s contribution in the electrical field which was of major significance. I moved to Glyndwr University in Wrexham, North Wales, where I latterly became Deputy Vice Chancellor (i.e. Deputy President) and hence I made efforts to research Priestley connections via the Wilkinson family there and the Priestley sites in Nantwich and Warrington, which are not very distant. I retired in 2016, but remain active as an emeritus professor. Recently, I have become interested in Priestley’s contributions in optics, which have, I believe, been underestimated by his biographers.

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**Postings From Priestley House**

Number 70 Spring 2018

www.josephpriestleyhouse.org

570-473-9474
Sunday, March 11 was the day the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC) designated to commemorate the granting of the Charter from King Charles II to William Penn in March 1681. This year was the 337th Anniversary of Pennsylvania’s Charter. It was also the day that Priestley House celebrated the Joseph Priestley’s 285th birthday.

Day meant free admission to Priestley House for all visitors, self-guided tours, and chemistry demonstrations by Joseph Priestley (portrayed by Ron Blatchley). The Friends of the Joseph Priestley House put on the event to encourage visitors to learn more about the connection to Hippocrates, who lived his final years in Northumberland in 1804 in the room that served as his library, a room that housed 1,600 books, which he collected in the 11 years after his house in Fairfield, England, was burned to the ground by an angry political mob. Today’s collection, currently on display, is significantly smaller.

**THE PRIESTLEY FAMILY IN NORTHUMBERLAND**

**SUMMER HISTORY CAMP**

History Camp is once again returning to the Joseph Priestley House. On July 25, 26, and 27 children in grades 1 through 6 will be able to experience life in Northumberland with the Priestley family under the guidance of Jo Ann Long and Lorie Becker. The three-day camp will run from 9-12 each morning and is limited to 20 participants. Special Tours can be arranged by calling 570-473-9497 or by e-mail at info@josephpriestleyhouse.org.

**THE LEEDS LIBRARY: 250TH ANNIVERSARY**

In 2018 The Leeds Library will be celebrating its 250th Anniversary. As the oldest Membership Subscription Library in England, the anniversary is worthy of celebration. During 2018 The Leeds Library will mark this milestone with a program of exhibitions, displays, films, lectures, performances, and writing. In addition, the library will be giving tours and opening its collections so that members and non-members alike will be able to come into contact with the library’s rich treasure trove of literature. The extended access is intended to offer visitors an opportunity to develop an understanding of the library, as well as an appreciation both for the library’s part in the history of Leeds and for its role in the future.

**JOSEPH PRIESTLEY HOUSE**

**476 PRIESTLEY AVENUE NORTHUMBERLAND, PA 17857**

**Visitors Center**

Open 1-4 p.m.
Tours given at 1, 2 & 3

**Special Tours**

Can be arranged by calling 570-473-9497 or by e-mail at info@josephpriestleyhouse.org.

**Special Assistance**

Individuals who need special assistance or accommodation to visit and the Joseph Priestley House should contact us in advance to discuss their needs.

To join the Friends of Priestley House call 570-473-9497 or visit www.josephpriestleyhouse.org.

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**it’s a world doll day merry mary tea**

or at the Priestley-Forsyth Library in Northumberland and the Degenstein Community Library in Sunbury.

Participants will enjoy a formal Victorian tea as well as several make-and-take activities designed for children and the young at heart. Also, participants may dress up for the tea, or not, and are encouraged to bring along a favorite doll to participate in the festivities. Don’t miss out on the fun. Check the reservation form for more details.

**world doll day comes to joseph priestley house**

by deborah bernhisel

It’s a Doll’s World. Or it will be on June 9 from 1-4 pm when the Friends of the Joseph Priestley House sponsor a World Doll Day Celebration on the grounds of Joseph Priestley House. On that day the Pond Building will turn into a doll lover’s paradise with doll collectors filling the Pond Building. Spread throughout the grounds will be child friendly activities for the child in all of us. And on the mantle of the fireplace in the library will be a display of dolls once owned by Joseph Priestley’s great-granddaughter Anna Priestley. There will be storytelling under a tent, photo-ops with costumed cut-outs in period clothing, doll clothing vendors on-site with wares suitable for 18” dolls, and the fixings for root beer floats (after all Priestley is the reason we have carbonation). And with advance reservations guests can enjoy a Victorian style tea being hosted in the courtyard behind the Visitor Center.

The day’s festivities were planned in tribute to Ruth Eleanor McCorkill, a long time volunteer at the Joseph Priestley House and a lifelong doll collector. Visitors can learn more about her by visiting Tribute Hall. Ruth Eleanor created several dolls for events at Priestley House. One of those dolls, Merry Mary, provided the name for the event’s Victorian tea and will be on site the day of the celebration.

Doll collections and dollhouse exhibits will be available all day in the Pond Building, except during Treva Smith’s lectures; the adults participating in Memory Sharing in Tribute Hall are also available all day, except during their presentations. Story-tellers will be presenting throughout the day in addition to specified story times, and sales tables, refreshments, photo-op cut-outs, and activity tables will be available for visitors all day.

In addition to the activities on the grounds, the Visitor’s Center will be open for individuals and small groups to arrange guided tours of the Joseph Priestley House and for books and Priestley memorabilia. The Visitor’s Center will also be hosting a Chinese Auction that day, with proceeds benefiting Joseph Priestley House Museum events.

**tentative schedule of free admission events**

(This schedule includes times and events other than the reserved Merry Mary Tea Events)

- Under the Tent
- Pond Building
- Tribute Hall

1:15 pm. Storytime with Sarah Fisher.
1:30 pm. Treva Smith Lecture on Dolls.
1:45 pm. Fiona Powell Lecture.
2:00 pm. Memory Sharing: Ruth Eleanor McCorkill.
2:15 pm. Storytime with Laurie McCants.
2:30 pm. Catch-up time.
2:45 pm. Fiona Powell Lecture.
3:00 pm. Treva Smith Lecture on Dolls.
3:15 pm. Storytime with Kim King.
3:30 pm. Memory Sharing: Ruth Eleanor McCorkill.
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