

Holiday Happenings

Each December volunteers and site staff gather to decorate the Priestley House for the winter holiday season. Simple arrangements of evergreen boughs accented by holly, winter-berry branches and box-wood grace the fireplace mantles throughout the house.



Our sincere thanks go to A Touch of Class Landscaping, Northumberland, who graciously provided the evergreens for the season's display, and to Susan Brook and Karen Ninos for fresh plant cuttings from their gardens.

Visitors to the Twelfth Day winter holiday program remarked on the festive greenery and its fresh fragrance that enhanced the afternoon event. More than 60 participants received sprigs of fresh greenery to ensure 'good luck' in the New Year - a traditional Old English custom.

Membership

The Friends of Joseph Priestley House extend a sincere "Thank you" to everyone who renewed their Friends membership for 2008. By the time you receive this newsletter, members should have received a letter of acknowledgment and thanks as well as your membership card from Jack Holt, Friends Membership Secretary.

About Friends membership: Memberships are for one year, renewable each January for the calendar year. New memberships are gratefully accepted at any time.

FRIENDS OF JOSEPH PRIESTLEY HOUSE



472 Priestley Avenue
Northumberland, PA 17857

2008 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

*Please Note: With the exception of our 'Twelfth Day' winter holiday program on January 6, 2008, Joseph Priestley House will be closed from January 1 to March 9, 2008.

January 6

Twelfth Day at Priestley House 1:00 – 4:00 p.m.

March 9

Priestley House re-opens for the season

March 9

Commonwealth Charter Day 1:00 – 4:00 p.m. FREE admission!

March 30

Meet Mary Russell & Company 2:00 p.m.

April 19

Science Saturday 2:00 p.m. Pre-registration required

May 10

Annual PHMC Associates Forum at Pennsbury Manor, Morrisville, PA

July 23, 24 & 25

Summer History Camp 9:30 a.m. – 12 Noon Pre-registration required

September 2008

Friends of Joseph Priestley House Annual Meeting - details TBA

November 2

Heritage Day at Priestley House 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Hours and programs subject to change Admission is charged for all events excepted as noted above For further information or to request a detailed calendar of events, please call (570) 473-9474 or visit our website www.josephpriestleyhouse.org



POSTINGS FROM PRIESTLEY HOUSE

Newsletter of The Friends of Joseph Priestley House

Number 40 Spring 2008

www.josephpriestleyhouse.org

570-473-9474

Congratulations to Jo Ann Long, Volunteer of the Year 2007!

The Friends of Joseph Priestley House is pleased to honor Jo Ann Long as our 2007 Volunteer of the Year. Jo Ann has been a loyal and active volunteer at Joseph Priestley House since 2002 when she became a member of the Friends Board of Directors. Jo Ann has completed two 3-year terms of service on the board during which she served as the organization's treasurer for 5 years. Her conscientious record keeping and top-notch financial reports gave the board a solid basis on which to perform



its fiduciary responsibilities. Having recently retired after 33 years of teaching 4th grade in the Shikellamy School District, Sunbury, Jo Ann intends to continue her service to the Friends as a costumed interpreter and member of the Interpretation Planning team at Priestley House. Her positive attitude and long-standing interest in local history makes Jo Ann an enthusiastic advocate for Priestley House as an educational resource for visitors and elementary school students in particular.

Many, many thanks, Jo Ann, for your energetic support and cheerful advocacy!

Associates Forum News

The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC) will present the 2008 Associates Forum, a state-wide program that brings together members of the many Associates and Friends organizations that support our sites and museums on Pennsylvania's Trails of History®. This year's program will be held on Saturday, May 10 at Pennsbury Manor, Morrisville, the country estate of Pennsylvania's founder, William Penn. Penn's reconstructed home is surrounded by numerous outbuildings and gardens and beautifully situated on the Delaware River.

The one-day forum features topics of particular interest to volunteers working with not-for-profit organizations. Activities include talks, educational programs, dialogue sessions, and tours.

One highlight of the day will be the Volunteer of the Year luncheon during which awards are presented to those individuals honored for their special contributions to the PHMC's sites and museums across the Commonwealth. There is also plenty of time to meet volunteers from other sites and learn about the ways in which they provide support to their museum programs. All current and any prospective members of the Friends of Joseph Priestley House and guests are invited and encouraged to attend and participate in the Forum. For full information and registration, please contact Andrea Bashore at 473-9474 before April 25, 2008.

Recent Gifts

Thank you to our generous donors for their gifts in support of archival collections, exhibits, and research at Priestley House.

- Pamphlet "Joseph Priestley's Birmingham – A Trail of 18th Century Birmingham," an illustrated trail map to locations associated with Priestley within and nearby the city of Birmingham, England. The city walk begins at the Priestley statue in Chamberlain Square and traces the environment in which Priestley lived and worked. The pamphlet is an outcome of the Joseph Priestley and Birmingham Project, directed by the Birmingham & District Local History Association. Given by Jim Birch of the Priestley Society.



- Educational DVDs "Joseph Priestley: An Eighteenth-Century Scientist," a recorded presentation of Priestley's electrical experiments made by Dr. Goronwy Tudor Jones, reader in high energy physics, School of Physics & Astronomy at University of Birmingham. Given by Dr. Malcolm Dick, project manager of the Joseph Priestley and Birmingham Project, and Jim Birch.

- Three color photographic views of a bust of Joseph Priestley recently completed in lime wood by wood carver and Priestley enthusiast Roy Billingham of Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands, England. Given by the artist.

Many thanks also to Rebecca Hollenbach for her generous donation of a new 8-foot fiberglass ladder – easy to use and just great for cleaning all those hard-to-reach places!

XXXXXXXXXX PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE XXXXXXXXXXXX

The board of the Friends of the Joseph Priestley House is delighted to announce the results of the Bradley Shoemaker print fund raiser. After a lovely reception at the Shoemaker Gallery, the Friends held a special auction of two limited edition prints signed by the artist and three living Joseph Priestley descendants. Margaret Weirick and Fred Kessler were the lucky bidders - very special thanks to Margaret and Fred and thank you as well to those individuals who purchased prints. The event brought in over \$1500 for the Friends!

Please note that there are still several prints available at the Shoemaker Gallery and a limited number of prints available at the Priestley House gift shop. If you missed out on the fund raiser and would like to purchase a print, you may contact the Shoemaker Gallery directly at (570) 524-0423 and speak with either Brad or Tracy. Don't forget, these prints make beautiful gifts and Mother's Day and wedding season is right around the corner.

I would also like to acknowledge this year's Volunteer of the Year, Jo Ann Long. Jo Ann served several years as our board's Treasurer and was (and is) a "volunteer extraordinaire". Jo Ann will be honored on May 10 at the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission Associates Forum. Congratulations Jo Ann and keep up the good work!

I would also like to take a few moments to extend our heartfelt thanks and gratitude to all of our members and volunteers. The Joseph Priestley House is grateful for all you do and we just wanted to thank you for all you do.

Amanda Kessler

XXXXXXXXXX MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR XXXXXXXXXXXX

I have served as the director of the Joseph Priestley House for almost ten years. During that time some things have remained the same, and some things have changed. As you may recall, the historic site and the Friends organization recently adopted and implemented a three-year strategic plan to guide the overall operations of the Priestley House until June 2010. Items included in the strategic plan are primarily 'engines' of change or products of change. This springtime edition of the Friends newsletter is an example of a changed product - a benchmark achieved within the structure of the strategic plan.

I hope you will enjoy the new look of "Postings from Priestley House" and continue to read the articles and news items we offer. As newsletter editor, I invite your comments and suggestions, and also your contributions. I am always on the look-out for Priestley-related articles whether short, medium or lengthy to include in future editions of "Postings" - the official newsletter of your organization, the Friends of Joseph Priestley House.

Andrea Bashore

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FRIENDS OF JOSEPH PRIESTLEY HOUSE

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Andrea Bashore, Ex Officio
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SITE STAFF

- Andrea Bashore, Site Administrator
Brooke Dearman, Custodial Guide

Joseph Priestley House is a National Historic Landmark and a National Historic Chemical Landmark

administered by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission with support from the Friends of Joseph Priestley House, a registered Charitable organization whose official registration and financial information may be obtained from the PA Department of State by calling within PA 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

VISIT

WWW.JOSEPHPRIESTLEYHOUSE.ORG

or Call 570-473-9474 for

Priestley House hours of operation
Friends membership information
& application

Individuals who need special assistance or accommodation to visit Joseph Priestley House should call 570-473-9474 in advance to discuss their needs. Pennsylvania TDD relay service is available at (800) 654 -5984.

Historic Housekeeping Underway

By Susan Brook

When I clean house I rarely take time to think about it. I just want to get the boring work done so I can move on to something more interesting. Modern impatience with chores shows up in the punchy names of modern cleaning products: Top Job, Ajax. Hit it with heavy weaponry and kill that dirt!

So when site director Andrea Bashore and regional curator Jen Glass recently offered to train volunteers to deep clean the Priestley House and its 18th century collections, it required slowing down, breathing deeply and adopting an entirely different pace.

Chemicals that could strip off even a little layer of the surface are definitely not in our arsenal. While we will be washing the walls, chair rails, baseboards and floors with Murphy's Oil Soap, collection items rarely see even clear water. The guiding principle is to do the gentlest possible dusting with cotton cloths and natural bristle brushes.

Glass spent a morning reviewing museum cleaning and object handling techniques, starting with proper cleaning attire. Just some old clothes, that jeans shirt, right? She advises turtle-necks or pullover sweatshirts without buttons or zippers. Nothing that could accidentally scratch something.

I feel like I'm getting ready to do surgery. We remove rings and watches. Wash our hands. Don white cotton gloves. Brooke Dearman pulls up her long hair so it won't catch on anything.

Glass shows us how to set up a staging area for cleaning small objects. A conference table covered with a quilted mover's blanket will cushion Joseph Priestley's chess men and board, the baroque flute and book that are the library table's display. We move each item separately, inspect, then dust it with a natural bristle brush.

When it takes two people to move a piece like the day bed, advance planning and consultation are required. We decide where we will be putting it to clean the wall behind it, who will move forward, who will move backward. We lift on a count of three.

We clear half the room, clean it, then very slowly and carefully replace furniture, then start the other half. The only modern tools we use are a vacuum cleaner for paint chips we dislodge while scrubbing, a spray bottle that holds a plexiglass cleaning solution, and a portable fan to dry floors faster.

Textiles are one of the hardest things to handle. At our site, there aren't many and some are modern reproductions. But they are valued exhibit resources, to be preserved carefully. So again gloves are worn to avoid oils from our hands getting on the cloth. To vacuum a chair seat and the daybed cushion, we lay a special textile screen gently over the fabric first. Glass demonstrates how to keep the vacuum brush attachment about one inch from the screen and move slowly across the surface.

To the modern eye it hardly seems this will clean anything, but telltale bits of lint show up now and then above the screen. The idea, she says, is to clean well enough to prevent problems in the future and keep collections in good shape.

Any damage to an item is noted on condition reports kept for each item. The chessmen have some chips, so we note those. Their file shows the chips were noted earlier. It's not new damage, but Glass suggests we should note which pieces are chipped. The chess file includes a photo of a match in progress, so Brooke will be able to reset the pieces later.



But for now, our mission is move, dust, scrub and mop. It will take three people about three hours to clean the library. We leave the task of book dusting for later.

In the museum world, slow and steady wins the race.

Editor's note:

My deepest thanks are extended to volunteers Susan Brook, Becky Hollenbach and Jo Ann Long who answered Eastern Regional Curator Jennifer Glass's call to participate with site staff in our first annual housekeeping project focused on the exhibit rooms of the Priestley House. By the time you read this newsletter, the cleaning team will have completed their task. Thanks to the Friends of Joseph Priestley House for providing lunches for our cleaning crew.

Meet New FJPH Board Members

In January, the Friends welcomed three new representatives to the Board of Directors: Susan Brook, of Bloomsburg, worked at the Press-Enterprise as a reporter and feature writer from 1977 to 2000. In retirement, she began to volunteer at Joseph Priestley House as a receptionist, tour guide and costumed interpreter. She was named Volunteer of the Year for 2004. She enjoys the vital, evocative atmosphere of Joseph Priestley House and likes meeting visitors from all over, even the two hurried Japanese businessmen who put her on the spot by asking for the dates Priestley lived. Momentarily stumped, she gave them a pamphlet and now those dates are embedded in her brain: 1733-1804. A native of Queens, N.Y., she has lived in Bloomsburg since 1967. She is a graduate of Antioch College, where she studied French and German. She and her husband, Richard, professor emeritus of philosophy at Bloomsburg University, are parents of Edward, of Corvallis, Oregon, and Daniel, of Alexandria, Virginia. Their grandson, Ben, of Corvallis, is 13. Susan helps Bloomsburg-based River Poets plan events, writes poetry and plays recorder with Bloomsburg Early Music Ensemble.

Cindy Inkrote, the director of the Northumberland County Historical Society in Sunbury, has joined the Friends of Joseph Priestley House board. She served as a volunteer and board member at the historical society for 18 years before becoming its first full-time director in January 2007. Cindy has an avid interest in local history and looks forward to working with the board on a variety of projects in the future.

A graduate of Susquehanna University, Cindy worked in the newspaper, printing, and graphic arts industries for many years. She lives with her husband, Ron, near Sunbury and has a 22-year-old son, Zachary, who serves with the Pennsylvania National Guard in Egypt.

Arlene Murray's first 2 1/2 years of undergraduate studies at Bucknell University was as a chemistry major with a desire to become a Pharmacist. Circumstances did not permit this and she graduated from Bucknell University with a degree in Accounting. Upon graduation Arlene utilized her education for over 30 years with ACF Industries in Milton, PA holding positions as an Accounting Manager, Financial Analyst, and Material Procurement Specialist. She currently works with Eagle Construction Solutions in Lewisburg, PA. "My love for the sciences and religious beliefs shall make for an excellent marriage with the Friends of Joseph Priestley House. I look forward to serving as a Board Member and treasurer and acquiring more knowledge about Joseph Priestley and his teachings."

Arlene resides in Milton, PA with Robert, her husband of 35 years. They enjoy traveling, riding their Harley with friends and spending time with their families.