

NEW ACCESS RAMP AT PRIESTLEY HOUSE

The structural renovations to the Priestley Avenue side of Joseph Priestley House required the removal of the ramp that provided wheelchair access to the structure. PHMC (Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission)

crews have installed a new ramp, which is a combination of pressure treated wood and an aluminum mesh floor. The newly installed ramp leads from the sidewalk to the Priestley Avenue entrance.

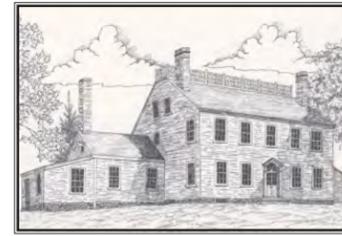
New ramp, side view and front view.



FRIENDS OF JOSEPH PRIESTLEY HOUSE



P.O. Box 226
Northumberland, PA. 17857



POSTINGS FROM PRIESTLEY HOUSE

Newsletter of The Friends of Joseph Priestley House

Number 68 Summer 2017

www.josephpriestleyhouse.org

570-473-9474

DESCENDENTS GATHER AT PRIESTLEY HOUSE

By Deborah Bernhisel

2017 SEASON

March 12 -- November 19
Except Easter Sunday &
Mother's Day

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

SPECIAL EVENTS

September 27
Annual Meeting
of the Friends of
Joseph Priestley House
at 253 Front Street
Northumberland, PA
Social at 6:00 p.m.
Dinner 6:30 p.m.
(same time and location
as 2016)

Watch your mailbox
for the election ballot
and additional details
concerning
cost and program

Sunday, November 5
Heritage Day
Open from 1 to 4 p.m.
Dr. Priestley's Demonstrations
at 1:30 & 3:00 p.m.
Free Admission

Sunday, January 7
Twelfth Night
Open from 4 to 7 p.m.
Dr. Priestley's Demonstrations
at 4:30 & 6:00 p.m.
Free Admission

The weather was picture perfect when descendents of Joseph Priestley arrived on August 5 to visit the home in Northumberland that, for them, means more than just the residence of a famous scientist, theologian, and political activist.

Nineteen special guests registered that Saturday morning to begin a day of activities designed to lead them through some of their own family history. Priestley family descendents traveled from across the United States -- Washington, Tennessee, Florida, North Carolina, Missouri, as well as various communities in Pennsylvania and New Jersey -- to gather in Northumberland for this special Descendents Day, the first since 1994.

The morning hours allowed these guests access to the Priestley house and grounds. Nearly everyone took advantage of the basement to the widow's walk (rooftop parapet) tour of the house itself. Docents were on hand to provide tours for the descendents and their families, and the almost fall-like weather made a visit to the widow's walk a special treat. It had been 23 years since a Descendents Gathering occurred at Priestley House, and for many of the guests who registered on the 6th, it was their first visit to the home of their famous ancestor.

Following a catered bag lunch, the group left the grounds of the Priestley House and began to explore the community. The Priestley Chapel was the first stop on the Northumberland portion of the visit. Hope W. Kopf provided the visitors with a 15 minute talk as well as a short organ recital before they continued their journey through Northumberland, visiting various Priestley family residences scattered throughout the borough.

Later in the afternoon, the descendents and guests were also able to visit Riverview Cemetery on the corner of Hanover and 7th Streets in Northumberland, where both Joseph and Mary Priestley are buried, along with 18 other Priestley descendents.

The evening offered descendents and



Direct descendents of Joseph Priestley gathered on the front steps of Priestley House.

guests, along with some volunteers, an opportunity for a catered meal in the Pond Building. Laurie McCants and Daniel Roth gave the guests some background on *Gunpowder Joe* and then read some scenes for the enjoyment of the audience. Once again Joseph Priestley took center stage.

Since this special event was planned to coincide with Oxygen Day, many of Saturday's registrants and a few additional descendents were able to join the activities at Priestley House on Sunday, including front row seats for Ron Blatchley's portrayal of Joseph Priestley, Scientist.

At the end of the weekend, the visitors took home a folder filled with historical information and family history, connections to family members they had never before known, and a wealth of on-site experiences orchestrated by Tom Bresenhan and Barbara Johnson. And if the positive comments by the descendents on the state of the grounds, the upkeep of the property, and the efforts put forth by the volunteers on their behalf are any indication, the event was a success.



Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission
Tom Wolf, Governor ~ Nancy Moses, Chair ~ James M. Vaughan, Executive Director

OXYGEN DAY AT PRIESTLEY HOUSE

Good weather and Priestley descendents added to the usual festivities of Oxygen Day. Costumed docents, available in every room of Priestley House and throughout the grounds, saw a steady stream of guests. Of course, Dr. Joseph Priestley was the highlight of the day. Ronald Blatchley's portrayal of Joseph Priestley drew three sittings, rather than the usual two, with descendents



Bloomsburg Early Music Trio

filling the front rows during the first demonstration of the afternoon.

An added attraction was a musical trio performing period music in the Drawing Room of the Priestley House. Susan Brook, Richard Brook, and Susan Swartz of the Bloomsburg Early Music Ensemble, performed using period instruments, much to the delight of guests who congregated in and around the Drawing Room during performances.



Joseph Priestley in action on Oxygen Day.

OXYGEN DAY AT BOWOOD HOUSE

Oxygen Day is currently being celebrated every day at Bowood House where it was first discovered in 1774. Bowood House was the home of William Petty, earl of Shelburne, located near Derry Hill in Wiltshire, England. It is here that Priestley conducted some of his most famous experiments.

The "Priestley & Patronage" exhibition, curated by Bowood House archivist Jo Johnson, tells the story of

Dr. Joseph Priestley's discovery of oxygen and nitrous oxide at Bowood House in the 1770s according to Sam Blanchard of the *Wiltshire Gazette and Herald*.

Dr. Priestley was employed by Bowood owner, Lord Shelburne, from 1773 to 1780 and was given a house in Calne and a salary of £250 -- \$45,479 in today's currency -- to carry out his experiments at Bowood, be a companion to Lord Shelburne, and to help educate Lord Shelburne's sons.

FRIENDS OF JOSEPH PRIESTLEY HOUSE

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JOSEPH PRIESTLEY HOUSE
473 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

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

HISTORY CAMP AT PRIESTLEY HOUSE

By JoAnn Long and Deborah Bernhisel

History through the eyes of a child is an enlightening adventure. But then, history is an adventure. This year's History Camp was an adventure into "Colonial Life in Northumberland with the Priestley Family."

Camp Coordinators JoAnn Long and Lorie Becker, with the help of Nigel Kurtz, Michael Becker, and Daniel Lehman led 10 campers back in time to the late 18th century and everyday life in Northumberland.

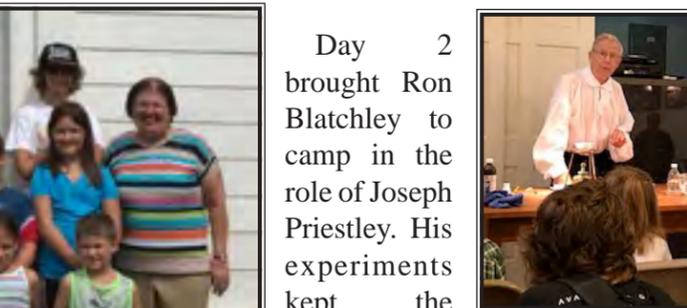
On Day 1 the campers got a tour of the Priestley House, an introduction to Joseph Priestley through a DVD presentation, got a look at children's life in the Children's Room, and had their first experience with hands-on crafting creating a punch tin decorative item using a hammer, nails and a tin lid. It was during the house tour that the Camp Coordinators got an insight into the youth perspective on history. When the campers were asked what the Priestleys used for light, since they didn't have electricity, one young camper responded, "a cell phone."



Colonial games didn't need electricity.



2017 History Camp participants, helpers, and Coordinator JoAnn Long.



Joseph Priestley instructing campers.

Day 2 brought Ron Blatchley to camp in the role of Joseph Priestley. His experiments kept the campers' attention, particularly when he changed pennies into "gold" (actually a shiny brass patina) and sent each camper home with one souvenir "gold" penny.

Children's games of this period did not involve video games, so part of this summer's camping experience was learning to play jacks, Game of Graces, Jacob's ladder, marbles and other non-electronic games.



Day 3: Leaf Printing

Day 3 focused on Colonial life – food, crafts, and clothing. And as on previous days, campers created a take-home craft; this time it was a leaf print project out of which they crafted picture frames.

History became real for these 10 campers during their three days at Priestley House. In fact, it was so real that one young camper, in his thank you note to Joseph Priestley after Priestley's visit to camp, inquired as to whether Priestley had "used a time machine to come to our camp and speak to us." One can only hope that history seems that real to all the visitors who pass through the grounds of Priestley House.

UPDATE TO CHILDREN'S ROOM

The canvas floor cloth has finally replaced the tan rug in the Children's Room at Priestley House. It is very appropriate to 1800.

