

## A PRIESTLEY VISITS PRIESTLEY HOUSE

By Barbara Johnson

It was a normal Saturday afternoon in May at the Museum when I answered a phone call. The voice on the other end said, "I am Charles Priestley, a direct descendent of Dr. Joseph Priestley. We would like to come and visit the house."

He was 12 years old when he last visited. Everything seemed different this trip. The house was not isolated as he remembered and the Susquehanna River had been added to the scenery. Charles studied aeronautical



Charles Priestley

engineering, and became a Navy pilot. Today he is a businessman living in Haiti, working for United Airlines and flying helicopters. While studying the Priestley Timeline panels in the Pond Building he noticed that Priestley's son William lived in Louisiana, commenting that he also has a home there.

Charles visited the Priestley family gravesites and photographed head stones. He left to catch a plane but promised to return with his son next year.

## STUDENT WINS WITH STORY ABOUT PRIESTLEY

Marley Kinsey of Middleton, PA recently won the Junior Fiction prize in the Hershey Story's History Contest with her story on Priestley's Legacy. She tells of meeting Joseph Priestley in his home in Northumberland, PA and visiting places in town.

To read article from the Sunbury Daily Item newspaper and the prize-winning story go to <http://dailyitem.com/shikregion/x730864046/Priestleys-Legacy-essay-wins-Hershey-History-Contest>

## FRIENDS OF JOSEPH PRIESTLEY HOUSE



P.O. Box 346  
Lewisburg, PA. 17837



# POSTINGS FROM PRIESTLEY HOUSE

Newsletter of  
The Friends of Joseph Priestley House

Number 56 Summer 2013

[www.josephpriestleyhouse.org](http://www.josephpriestleyhouse.org)

570-473-9474

### 2013 SEASON

Visitor Center open from 1 to 4pm, Saturday and Sunday (except Easter) March 10 until end of November with tours at 1, 2 and 3 PM

#### Special Events

All events from 1 to 4pm unless  
Otherwise noted

#### SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2013

##### Heritage Day

Dr. Priestley demos at 1:30 & 2:30pm

Children's games

Regular Admission fees

#### SUNDAY, JANUARY 5, 2014

##### Twelfth Day

Dr. Priestley demos at 1:30 & 2:30pm

Children's games

Regular Admission fees

### ANNUAL MEETING

#### SEPTEMBER 25<sup>TH</sup> 2013

Pond Building at

Priestley House

**Social Hour** Begins at 5 p.m.

**Dinner** at 6 p.m.,

Followed by brief meeting

Program at 7p.m.,

**Speaker** ~ Priestley Re-enactor

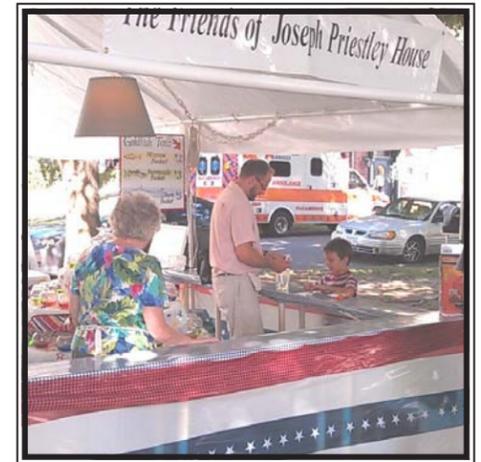
Ron Blatchley

in his performance called

*"Beware! A Priestley has entered the land."*

### PINEKNOTTER DAYS

Again this year, the Friends had a booth at the local Pineknottter Days in Northumberland over the 4th of July week. Scott Onsager coordinated the event with set up help from Bruce and Barbara Johnson. Scott states that, "Gretchen Walberg worked especially hard in helping to set up the goldfish stand on a daily basis. She provided free soda, water, and goldfish crackers to other volunteers and to participants departing without a goldfish. She also organized a free event where participants guessed the number of goldfish crackers in a glass container and donated the prizes



Scott Onsager presents gold fish to young winner at Pineknottter Days



Geise twins toss ping-pong balls at goldfish bowls. (Photo by Sam Geise, grandfather)

for the winners." The project gave away 1,000 goldfish and made \$1,500 during the Pineknottter Days celebration.

Volunteers this year were: Nick Bigger, John Crissman, Brooke Dearman, Kathy Funk, Dixie Gava-son, Sam Geise, George and Kathy Godlewski, Loye Hallden, Cindy Inkrote, Bruce and Barbara Johnson, Linda Kistner, Mike Kuhns, Jamie and Brittney Lahr, Jo Ann Long, Scott Onsager, Shelley Paul, Seth Rohrbach, Joan Simpson, Michael Smith, Mackenzie Stuck, Gretchen Walberg, and Margaret Weirick.

### "DIG INTO READING" PASSPORT

The Joseph Priestley House is one of nine participating museums in the "Dig into Reading" Passport program sponsored by libraries in Northumberland, Snyder and Union Counties. The Heritage Committee of the Susquehanna River Valley Visitors Bureau prepared the passport.

Children participating in library summer reading programs bring their passport to a participating museum with an adult. The kids get in free and the adults pay regular admission. Kids get the passport stamped and after visiting 3 museums return it to their home library for a prize.

## PRIESTLEY ELEMENTARY VISIT (AGAIN!)

Again in May this year the 6<sup>th</sup> grade class from Priestley Elementary School in Northumberland visited Priestley House. On the morning long history excursion pupils visited Priestley House and the Fort

Augusta Museum in Sunbury operated by the Northumberland County Historical Society. The morning ended with a picnic at Shikellamy State Park Marina. The Priestley Elementary PTA sponsored the tour.

## PRIESTLEY HOUSE HISTORY CAMP 2013

Camp Leader Lindy Fasold reports, "History Camp went very well this year. We ended up having 12 campers, so that is better than our initial roster of five! Ron Blatchley came on Wednesday and did some hands on experiments with the kids. John Moore came on Thursday as Thomas Cooper.



Emily Dietrich with History Campers



Henry Lyon and Ron Blatchley do experiments

Emily Dietrich gave an archaeology demonstration on Friday that the kids loved. It was fantastic!" Two young Priestley descendents, Henry and Edward Lyon, attended this year.

## VIDEOS ON PRIESTLEY DISCOVERIES

The Friends are producing a series of videos to help docents explain Priestley's scientific discoveries. The first video on carbon monoxide is funded by a grant from the American Chemical Society (ACS) to the Susquehanna Valley Section of ACS. The Merck Foundation through a Merck Cherokee, "Neighbor of Choice" grant, funds the second video on ammonia.

Each video features Priestley's discovery process conducted in a modern laboratory.

Research for the project is by Mary Ellen Bowden who retired from the Chemical Heritage Foundation. CCN Productions from Danville, PA is the video firm selected. The carbon monoxide video is being filmed in a chemistry lab at Bucknell University with chemist Dee Casteel.

## FRIENDS OF JOSEPH PRIESTLEY HOUSE

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Tom Bresenhan, President  
Susan Brook, Vice-President  
William Simpson, Secretary  
Mike Kuhns, Treasurer  
Sam Geise  
Cindy Inkrote  
Donald Mencer  
Scott Onsager  
Dave Richard

### Volunteer Coordinator

JoAnn Long  
Newsletter Editor  
Cheryl Snyder

**JOSEPH PRIESTLEY HOUSE**  
473 PRIESTLEY AVE.  
NORTHUMBERLAND, PA 17857

### 2013 HOURS OF OPERATION

**March thru November**  
Every Weekend  
Except Easter Sunday

**Visitors Center**  
Open 1-4 p.m.  
Tours Given at 1, 2 and 3 p.m.

**Special Tours**  
Can be arranged by calling  
570-473-9474 or by e-mail at  
[info@josephpriestleyhouse.org](mailto: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 570-473-9474 or visit  
[www.josephpriestleyhouse.org](http://www.josephpriestleyhouse.org)

## CANDLES FOR PRIESTLEY HOUSE

by Susan Brook

Here's how to experience what 18<sup>th</sup> century folks had to do to keep their households running. ~ make candles the old fashioned way, by dipping cotton wicks in hot wax.

Volunteer Barb Johnson got the project underway by attending a candle-making session held at nearby R.B. Winter State Park, led by Mary Ann Bigley. Barb also bought the raw materials and offered her family campsite for our workshop session.

Our method was modernized a bit: we used commercially available wax sold at craft stores, which hardens to a very white candle. In 18<sup>th</sup> century America, beef fat, or tallow, might have been more common. That is said to produce a rather smelly candle, which could attract insects and other pests. So we decided not to venture that far into total authenticity.

Beeswax was another potential raw material, but it is expensive now and may have been costly for the 18<sup>th</sup> century Pennsylvanian as well.

Volunteers worked outdoors on a cool spring day, at the Selinsgrove campsite of Barb and Bruce Johnson. We had the enthusiastic help of Barb's sister Myrna Ward and her husband, Ron, of Dubois, visiting for the occasion. After rigging up handles for some narrow tins, (recycled cookie containers from the



Bruce and Barbara Johnson candle making.

grocery store) Bruce and his brother-in-law built the fire and heated the wax over an open fire. Then candle-dippers Barb Johnson, Gretchen Walberg, Shelley Paul, Emily and Bailey Johnson, Myrna Johnson Ward and Susan Brook took turns dunking the wicks into the hot wax. One long wick grasped at midpoint can make a pair of candles, the wick later being cut in half.

Keep the wick in too long and the accumulated wax can melt off, so a quick up and down technique soon evolved, with a little drying time in between. Once the candle is the desired size, it has to cool and harden a bit before the maker rolls it on a flat surface to make it turn out round. Otherwise the candles tend to flatten noticeably as they cool.

In about two and half hours' time we were able to produce three dozen candles. We also used a commercial hardener, so our work won't soften too much in the summertime heat and humidity experienced at Priestley House.

We don't actually know whether the Priestleys' candles would have been made by servants, hand dipping at home or formed in molds, or purchased from a tradesman. We just had a hankering for a more hand-crafted candle for the chandeliers, sconces and mantelpiece candlesticks – thirty-one candles in all – throughout the house.



New candles in chandelier in hallway at Priestley House

## HERB GARDEN AT PRIESTLEY HOUSE

A small herb garden will be installed at Priestley House this fall where the historic gardens were located according to the 1800 architectural drawing of the property by Thomas Sambourne.

This is phase one of a larger project. The scale of the project is to determine how volunteers maintain the garden and incorporate it into the tours given to visitors. Board member Scott Onsager is directing the project.