

LAUREL HILL MANSION NEWS

WANTED Donations for the Holiday Shop

Holiday Committee Chair Tish deTuro and committee members have been hard at work making plans for the December Holiday tours at Laurel Hill Mansion.

The committee requests new &/or gently used items for the Holiday Shop.

Suggestions include Christmas ornaments, towels, candles, decorations, pottery, jewelry, scarves, hats, gloves, all things Philadelphia, etc.

All proceeds from the shop benefit Laurel Hill Mansion.

All items are requested to be received by November 1st.

Please email gift-shop@laurelhillmansion.org for more information or to make delivery arrangements.



A Message From The President

Summer is past and the bright autumn leaves and cooler temperatures will soon be upon us. Laurel Hill Mansion will transition from a summer music venue to a quiet villa looking out to the scullers on the Schuylkill River. We continue to welcome plein air painters who capture this beautiful scene on canvas.

Our decorating committee, headed by Tish deTuro and the Militia Hill Questors, will once again be working hard to make the mansion look amazing for the holiday season. We are planning for a special members' preview reception on Sunday, Dec. 1 from 2-4 PM. Mark your calendar to join us for a first look at the decorations and enjoy refreshments with other members of our group.

The holiday tours are the most important time of the year, when we are able to introduce visitors to the history and hospitality of our site, but we can't do it without the help of our volunteers. I hope you can spare a few hours to welcome our guests and make them feel at home serving tea and working in the gift shop. Volunteers will be needed during the holiday tours. Let's all work together to make this holiday season a success.

Barbara Frankl, President, WFGP

Volunteers are needed to help with the Holiday Tours.

Volunteer hosts & hostesses

Greet Visitors

Help in the Gift Shop

Serve our Spiced Tea

Help at Special Events

and

Help create a memorable

experience for all who visit

Laurel Hill Mansion during the

Holiday Tours

Volunteers are most needed on

Saturdays and Sundays.

Dressing in period costumes is

encouraged but not required.

Please email WFGP Vice

President and

Hospitality/Volunteer

Committee Chair

Christine Smith

c.smith@wfgp.org

if you are interested in

volunteering.



2023 holiday decoration detail

We are pleased to announce, The Militia Hill Questers, who created such wonderful decorations last year will again be decorating Laurel Hill Mansion for the holidays.

Fall and Winter 2024 Calendar

Friday, October 4, 2024 Plein Air Painting Day

Saturday, October 5, 2024 12:30 PM Chess

Saturday, October 12, 2024 Plein Air Painting Day

Saturday, October 19, 2024 12:30 PM Chess

Sunday, October 20, 2024 Plein Air Painting Day



Fall members meeting TBA

Saturday, November 2, 2024 12:30 PM Chess

Saturday, November 16, 2024 12:30 PM Chess

Sunday, December 1, 2024 from 2-4 PM

Members Holiday Preview Party

Holiday Tours

Thursday – Sunday 10:00AM to 4:00PM

December 5th – 8th

December 12th – 15th

December 19th -22nd

December 26th – 29th

Stay tuned for special holiday events, a membership special and upcoming events in 2025

Laurel Hill Mansion Collections Update

As some of you may know, I resigned from the Garden Committee in May. That is not to say that I haven't been busy. My recent project which is still actively ongoing is the enhancement of furniture and decorative art objects in the collection at Laurel Hill Mansion.

In July, I contacted Crystal Chandelier, a chandelier refurbishing company. They assigned Mike Lombardo to evaluate the cleaning and rewiring needs of our 19th c. French and Austrian crystals chandelier in the octagon room. He was on site on July 19th and brought the chandelier back to its original beauty in time to be enjoyed on the 21st when the Wister Quarter performed their concert in the same room.

Also on July 19th, Furniture Conservator, Jonathan Stevens started work on our Federal era mahogany secretary desk with attached bookcase, which is also located in the octagon room. Jonathan's immediate task was to replace a fallen rosette and finial from the top of the case. He noted that some of the brass hardware on the desk had been replaced at some point. We hope to secure period brasses toward maintaining authenticity to the era of the desk.

Jonathan then moved onto work on our mahogany tall case clock, c. 1785 which was made by Wm. Bevans of Norristown. The clock was also missing a rosette and central urn finial. Jonathan noted extreme UV light damage to the clock. After cleaning the surface, he applied a mixture of varnish and solvents toward mitigating some of the sun damage. Sadly, the central finial was snapped off at the stem of the urn, so he continues to attempt reattaching the finial without visual distraction or depleting the clock's value.

It's important to note that conservation work is specialized. The glues, which are animal or fish based, making them protein adhesives are very strong but not damaging to the wood. These glues are the same recipe the original wood workers used hundreds of years ago. Attempts to address the UV damage are being done without further build up of heavy layers of varnishes, shellacs, lacquers or waxes.

On August 6th, Greg Cheng from Allied Piano visited Laurel Hill Mansion to assess the condition of our early 19th c. John Broadwood forte piano. Greg was recommended to me by Jon Guenther at the Curtis Institute as their valued piano technician. The fortepiano was out of tune and the keyboard is damaged. Greg removed the keyboard toward viewing the interior strings, pins, hammers, etc. He noted previous repairs and replacements. Not surprisingly, all of the soundboard elements would have to be custom made toward making repairs. His quick estimate was nearing \$200,000.00 to complete this task.

I do not speak for the Board but it is safe to say, that repair cost is beyond our reach. Greg is completing research for us which will be needed to properly insure the fortepiano whether restored or appreciated for its antique value alone while viewed in the octagon room during tours and concerts. In unison with this ongoing restoration work, I reached out to two Auction Houses/Appraisers. The Board will decide our path forward with updating the collections values, make appropriate decisions based on those valuations and hopefully have those items photographed, cataloged and properly appraised on a specified schedule through time.

All of these efforts comes at a cost. Expert work is not inexpensive. Future use of the spaces and objects at Laurel Hill Mansion are an important part of the considerations of the Board as we hope to continue to provide tours, concerts and varied special events.

Yours ever an antique lover,
Christine Mifsud,
Board Member, Women for Greater Philadelphia



Donations may be made at <https://laurelhillmansion.org/donate.html> or via check mailed to Women for Greater Philadelphia, P O Box 793, Spring House, PA 19477.

We are pleased to announce that the Samuel Shoemaker Telescope is NOW ON DISPLAY at Laurel Hill Mansion !



We are very fortunate to have this Mariners' Telescope that belonged to Samuel Shoemaker, who with his wife Rebecca Rawle Shoemaker, was one of the first residents of Laurel Hill mansion. It is through the generosity of Francis Rawle Shoemaker, a direct descendant of Samuel Shoemaker, that the telescope was gifted to Women for Greater Philadelphia, the stewards of Laurel Hill Mansion. The telescope had been passed through generations of the Shoemaker family and we welcome its return to Laurel Hill mansion.

Samuel Shoemaker (1725-1800) was a highly respected business man, merchant, lawyer, property owner, and local politician who served as Councilman

and later as Mayor of Philadelphia from 1769 - 1771. It is believed that Samuel Shoemaker used the telescope to observe merchant ships related to his business, coming in and out of the busy port of Colonial Philadelphia. During the British occupation of Philadelphia, Samuel, a Quaker and British Loyalist, served as Magistrate of Police. Later during the Revolutionary War, Samuel was forced into exile first to New York and then to London, England before returning to Philadelphia and Laurel Hill mansion.

When WFGP received the telescope, it was in need of some intricate repairs. It was important to locate a craftsman who would maintain the integrity and the historical value of this beautiful piece. The stewards engaged Master Colonial Instrument Craftsman, Jeffrey D. Lock, renowned restoration expert. His expertise is focused on the artistically crafted instruments of the Colonial period. Now that the refurbishing project has been completed, the telescope will be on permanent display here at Laurel Hill mansion. Safely displaying this valuable instrument was paramount, so we have procured a large lockable display case with good visibility and a large UV protected viewing window. We invite you all to come and see this special Mariner's telescope and are excited to announce that this important piece of Laurel Hill's history is back home and on display for all of us to see and enjoy.

**This historic colonial telescope is inscribed:
"Sam Shoemaker, Philadelphia 1754"**

By Christine Fisher Smith, Vice Pres. WFGP/Laurel Hill Mansion, with reference to "Samuel Shoemaker's Historic Colonial Telescope" Laurel Hill mansion newsletter Jan. 2022 by Nancy S Cohen, M.B.A. with research assistance from Anita McKelvey: historian and tour guide.



SCRAPBOOKING HOBBY OR HISTORICAL TIME CAPSULE?


Is a scrapbook simply a family member's hobby or a recognized and valued historical source? Actually, scrapbooking is *both*. While one might not have considered a sibling's scrapbook of school events and baseball games of much importance, to a historian it is valuable. Its images and text can reveal a time capsule of history, e.g., social norms, educational priorities, as well as family and community values.


How so? While the family scrapbook creator's intention focused on the sibling's accomplishments, the carefully clipped and pasted images also documented clothing styles, the mix of genders and ethnicities in group photos, prevalent science, math, or history topics, etc. They become a retroactive peek into a past society when future generations peruse the scrapbook.

Another provenance for scrapbook creation is among societies and organizations as they document their functions, and missions. Indeed, the Women for the Bicentennial (now known as Women for Greater Philadelphia) organized in response to the 200th Anniversary of America in 1976 kept many scrapbooks to document their activities. Their celebratory events included a ball, fashion show, restoration of Laurel Hill Mansion so it could be opened to the public, and the creation of a Time Capsule which will be opened in 2026 for the 250th Anniversary. It is fascinating to see how much they accomplished 50 years ago and to reflect on the changes over the last five decades. A Zoom meeting was unfathomable in 1976.

Patrick Hayes, PhD, archivist, scholar, and author discussed the utility of scrapbooks as a historical source and their enduring value as founts of information regarding the past. During his presentation at the American Catholic Historical Society which was in the process of procuring and saving its historical ephemera, Dr. Hayes also noted 19th century scrapbooking activities provided a forum for bonding - as groups formed to preserve documents around their topics of interest. He further emphasized the necessity to preserve older ephemera and digitalize them for future generations¹.

In modern times, before the 1980s, everyday scrapbooking was often used as a chronicle and was comprised of newspaper clippings, photos, award ribbons, etc. It might also contain memorabilia from special societal events and local news. The process was simple. The tools few -- scissors, glue, and a book of blank, heavy paper pages upon which to arrange the precious materials. Albeit a rather inexpensive pursuit, it was often treasured and kept within families for future generations. Many of us may remember keeping such items as prom programs, movie tickets, or a sweetheart's high school photo.





The history of keeping journals and diaries recounting personal experiences is older than one might expect. The earliest surviving journal (known as *Journal d'un bourgeois de Paris*) belonged to a French priest and included descriptions of life in the first half of 15th century Paris.¹ Wouldn't that be interesting to read!

During the 14th to 17th centuries, educated Europeans wrote "scraps" of information which were important to them inside bound journals known as commonplace journals. Here was where information could be organized, progress charted, mixed together with favorite inspirations, recipes, quotes, or perhaps religious passages, depending on authors' interests. Among more recent notable historic figures who kept scrapbooks are Thomas Jefferson, Mark Twain, Henry David Thoreau, and the family of Frederick Douglass to name a few as easily found on the World Wide Web.

Today, everyday scrapbooking has burgeoned into a billion-dollar industry encompassing a multitude of materials and tools to craft a personal creative style. These advanced scrapbooks are colorful with various sections and layers for each page, including specialized printed back papers, stickers, photographs, drawings, and embellishments for documenting adventures, important events, personal reflections, and more. They are works of art as well as documentations of life.

Marielen Christensen sparked the modern scrapbook hobby when, in 1980, she presented 50 family memory books at a World Conference on Records in Utah. Ms. Christensen opened the first store devoted to scrapbooking alone, Keeping Memories Alive.¹

As Women for Greater Philadelphia continue with plans for 2026 the upcoming 250th Anniversary of our wonderful Country, they are reflecting on the past 50 years, and you can bet there will be a scrapbook among their aspirations as more history is preserved for future generations.

Submitted by,


Mona Lisa Fiorentini PhD, MHA, MS

Board Member, Women for Greater Philadelphia

Hayes, P., PhD (2023, Sept.23). Scrapbook Historiography. American Catholic Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA, United States.

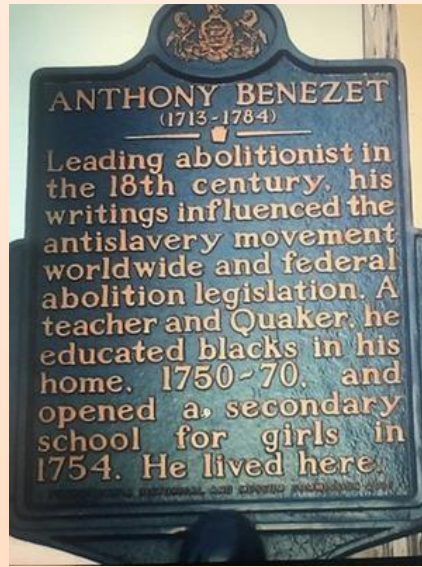
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Marie-Joseph Paul Yves Roch
Gilbert du Motier de La Fayette,
Marquis de La Fayette
Charles Willson Peale, after
Charles Willson Peale, 1779-1780
Oil on canvas Independence NHP



Chevalier de La Luzerne
Painted by Charles Willson Peale
1781-1782
Oil and Canvas
Courtesy of Independence National
Historical Park

The French Connection Lafayette and Luzerne

Two hundred years ago this month, the Marquis de Lafayette visited Philadelphia some forty years after his involvement with the American Revolution.

His 13- month tour between 1824-1825 was prompted by an invitation from President James Monroe at a time when the country was experiencing political strife and economic hardship. It was believed that Lafayette's presence was a way to celebrate the nation's 50th anniversary while also instilling the spirit of 1776 for the next generation of Americans.

Lafayette and his entourage traveled by carriage and ship to some 24 states, visiting hundreds of towns and villages, being greeted with much pomp and celebration by hundreds of thousands eager to see the famous and much-lauded last hero of the Revolution.

It's well documented that Lafayette spent more time in Philadelphia than any place in America.

Still unproven, but it's very possible Laurel Hill Mansion was visited by Lafayette when it was the country home of the Chevalier de la Luzerne, America's second minister from France, from 1778-1784.

Letters between Lafayette and Luzerne as well as journals published by the Marquis de Barge-Marbois, Luzerne's long-time secretary, who would take over diplomatic duties after the Chevalier left Philadelphia to become Minister to England, and the Marquis de Chastellux's, "Travels in North America" provide detailed accounts of Lafayette's activities as well as Luzerne's work behind the scenes as diplomat, financier and strategist during the American Revolution.

Lafayette was responsible for bringing Chevalier de la Luzerne to America.

Lafayette traveled back and forth between America and France a couple of times during the course of the Revolution. On his first return to France in 1778 Lafayette worked with the king and French court to raise money, arms and diplomatic support. Franklin was there, as well as one of America's future presidents, diplomat John Adams, wife Abigail and sons John Quincy and Charles Adams. That same year, Adams and his son Quincy would accompany the Chevalier and his secretary Marbois on the ship "Sensible" from France to Boston. Washington would meet up with Luzerne for the first time in NY state, not far from West Point. Luzerne would eventually make his way south to Philadelphia, building relationships with Continental Congress members from each northern state along the way.

Luzerne was well chosen by the French government to serve on this vital diplomatic mission. It required someone with extraordinary tact and trustworthiness and Luzerne fit the bill to a tee. Both Marbois and Chastellux would write that the Chevalier greatly respected Washington as a leader, and that Washington too had confidence in Luzerne as a reliable source of information and strategic military advice and influence.

The French government was greatly concerned about how their money was spent as corruption by military profiteers was a big problem. Indeed, the hardships at Valley Forge were due in no small part to greed by army contractors. Luzerne worked hard to stop this corruption. French funds were not handed over to Washington's staff. Instead, a special committee appointed by Congress handled its administration. Luzerne himself controlled which army subcontractors got business. During the course of the war, Luzerne used his personal line of credit to fund supplies for Washington's soldiers. Luzerne, who had a military background before his diplomatic career, also influenced the strategic end to the Revolution with the siege at Yorktown.

While in Philadelphia, Luzerne attended debates of the Colonial Congress and many afternoons took tea with the ladies of Philadelphia. His role here was as spy, for many households he soon realized had Tory sympathies. He'd use his charm and discretion to pick up information and points of view at these gatherings. That old adage, keep your friends close and enemies closer, served him well.

During residence in Philadelphia Luzerne became fluent in English and befriended many in the community. Luzerne socialized with Benedict Arnold at Mt. Pleasant (and possibly at Laurel Hill?). Luzerne entertained often at his elegant residence in Society Hill. And yet, like Washington, Luzerne would almost fall victim to Arnold's treasonous plot to have each of them captured by British forces at West Point. Lafayette would foil that plot in the nick of time.

Another American who had great influence with Luzerne was Rebecca Rawle Shoemaker's friend Anthony Benezet. This simple French Quaker, who was a hero to displaced Arcadians and other French emigres from the West Indies, and who would start the first schools for girls and blacks in the City, was greatly respected by the French diplomats. He would help negotiate on Rebecca's behalf with Luzerne in getting her beloved Laurel Hill returned to her, although she was not thrilled with the terms.

Years later, when Lafayette returns to tour America, he will meet William Rawle and his sons at various city fetes honoring the Marquis. This grand tour would prompt William to found the Historical Society of Pennsylvania in 1825 and become its first president.

Submitted by Anita McKelvey
Long-time guide and site historian at Laurel
Hill and Lemon Hill Mansions



Sunday, July 21, 2024 The Wister Quartet concert and reception



WFGP President Barb Frankl introduces
The Wister Quartet



Nancy Bean, first violin, addresses the
audience



The Wister Quartet in performance



The crowd recognizes Silvia Myers



Back porch reception



Back porch reception

Sunday, August 25, 2024 Allen Krantz concert and reception



Allen Krantz in performance



WFGP Vice President Christine Smith and
guest at the back porch reception



Allen Krantz and guest at the back porch
reception

Many thanks to those who contributed to the Bette Young Education Fund in her memory

Women for Greater Philadelphia, Inc. is a non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation of volunteers.