

# The Governor's Gossip

August 2024  
v. 42, no. 3

**Newsletter of the Governor Wolf Historical Society,  
Owner of the Wolf Academy Historic Site, East Allen Township**

## "The Apples of Your Eye" Fall Tea — October 13

By Linda Kortz

Our autumn tea planning is already in the works, and Gov. Wolf will offer another lovely afternoon - with far too many tempting morsels!

Gather your friends who are "The Apples of Your Eye" and make your reservations now! Our delightful tea will feature great music, a fun program, tea sandwiches, apple goodies, and a large variety of Autumn treats. Bring your favorite teacup - they have great stories

you can share!

The date is Sunday Oct. 13 from 2 to 4 p.m. Price is \$30 per person.

Since we always have a sellout crowd, be sure to make your reservation soon. All seats are assigned. To be seated together, any reservation for two or more guests *must be paid for on the same check*. Please list *all names in your group* with phone numbers when you mail your payment.



Partial view of the goodies table at our Spring tea. Photo by Barb Wiemann

### New Arts and Crafts Gathering

Would you like to get together with others who create with their hands? Share ideas with like minded people?

Craftspeople are invited to meet in the Monocacy School on the first and third Thursdays from 10 a.m. to noon. Participants should bring their craft/art projects to work on. There is no formal instruction. No registration is needed. A donation of \$5 per person is requested.

Questions? Contact Phyllis Facchiano at 610-217-2017.

Reservations are confirmed upon receipt of payment. The person handling the reservations for your group is always presented with a thank you gift!

Mail your check and required contact information for your group members to Linda Kortz, 1091 Copella Road, Bath, PA 18014. For questions, call 610-905-0007.

Our events are funded in part with funding from the Hotel Tax Grant Program through the County of Northampton Department of Community & Economic Development.



## Free Historic Site Tours Aug. 17, Sept. 21, Oct. 19, and Nov. 16

The Society offers free tours of our three historic buildings, grounds and new museum on the third Saturday of each month, April through November, from 1-3 p.m. No reservations are needed.

Knowledgeable guides will discuss the history of each building, Gov. George Wolf, and provide details about items in the museum.

The Society is always willing to provide tours to individuals, families, school classes, youth groups, and social organizations at other times. To schedule a tour, call 610-837-9015 or email [gwhs1958@gmail.com](mailto:gwhs1958@gmail.com)



Photo by Barb Wiemann

Members of the Sullivan Trail Questers from Pocono Pines gather outside the Ralston-McKeen House during their private tour in May.

## **Governor Wolf Historical Society**

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This newsletter is published four times a year (February, May, August and November) as a service to its members and the public by the Governor Wolf Historical Society. Contributions are encouraged and may be sent to the editor before the 1st of the publication month. However the Society reserves the right to select and edit all content.



## **Thank You!!**

**Frank & Jane Fisher** for a generous gift in memory of Sheila Fisher. Sheila was an active member and local reporter who attended our meetings many years ago.

**Liz & Alan Johnson** for their generous donation after their private tour of our site. Alan is a Wolf descendent.

**Jack Stanley** for mowing our grass. The Society is so fortunate to have Jack as our neighbor.

## **Save The Date — Winter Events**

**Wreath Making Classes** — Nov. 29 and 30

**House Tour** -- Our 42nd Annual Event — Dec. 7

**Holiday History Fest** — Dec. 7 and 8

**Candlelight Holiday Concert** — Dec. 15

Information will be available in the November newsletter and on the Society web site.

## **Monthly Meetings**

The Society holds monthly meetings at 6:30 p.m. on the second Tuesday of each month in the Monocacy School, located at our historic site, 6600 Jacksonville Road, Bath, PA 18014. All members and interested individuals are invited to attend.

## **Membership**

The Governor Wolf Historical Society is an all volunteer organization dedicated to preserving local history. If you are not a member, we invite you to become a member and support our activities. A membership form is on page 6 or join online at the Society's web page [www.govwolf.org](http://www.govwolf.org)

## **We Want Your Email Address!**

Our full color electronic newsletter is available in your inbox before the printed black and white version is mailed. Updates about our events and activities are emailed between newsletters. To be added to our email distribution list, please send your email address to Kathy Wilhelm at [gwhs1958@gmail.com](mailto:gwhs1958@gmail.com). If you supplied the Society with your email, and you are not getting emails about upcoming activities and events, contact Kathy at the same email.

## **Historic Site Rentals**

The Governor Wolf Historical Society is fully open and ready to rent out our buildings and 3 1/2 acre grounds to host your next birthday party, baby shower, meeting, or even a small wedding. We currently rent out the historic Wolf Academy and Monocacy School and the beautiful surrounding gardens. There is plenty of parking in the adjacent grassy meadow. For more information about rental opportunities, please contact Abby Spencer at [spencerabby@yahoo.com](mailto:spencerabby@yahoo.com) or 610-428-3975.



**June wedding and reception in the Academy.**  
Photos by Abby Spencer







## From Our President

Happy Summer Friends,

I hope you are staying cool in the heat of this summer. Our historic buildings have seen over a century (or two) of summers here in our small piece of the original Scots-Irish settlement in East Allen Township.

We believe the restoration and preservation of these buildings is more important than ever before. More and more early homes, historic sites, and entire villages are disappearing in the name of what is called progress. The rich early material culture of our area should be important to all of us. Historical societies like ours and others in the area all deserve to be supported, either by volunteering, attending events, memberships, or financial help. Our volunteer organization deeply appreciates all you do.

In this newsletter we recap some of our recent events - Summer Institute, Passport to History, Annual Dinner, and our annual trip. In addition, a wedding took place at our site, along with other smaller rentals.

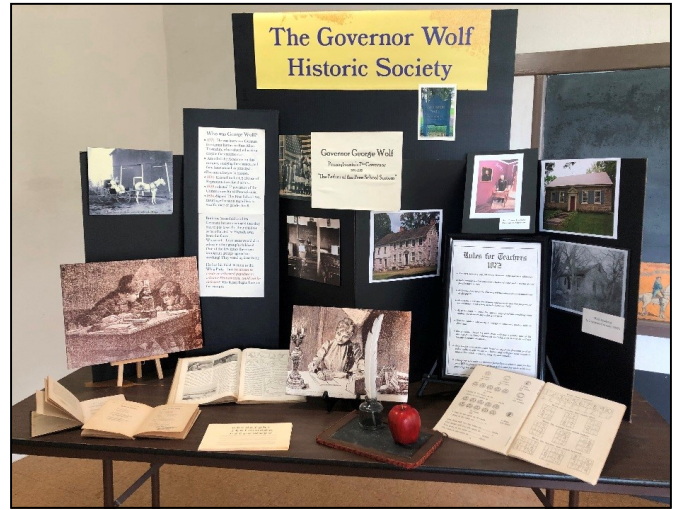
We hope to see you at one of our upcoming events.

*Kathy*

## Last Three Months At GWHS



Thirty members and friends enjoyed a bus excursion to the State Capitol in Harrisburg and Lititz on May 19. As this photo shows, it was a (picture) perfect day. Thank you to **Kathy Silfies** for organizing the trip. Photo by Kathy Wilhelm.



Gov. Wolf participated in Passport to History's Teacher's Night Out at the National Museum of Industrial History in Bethlehem on May 9. Teachers attended presentations and demonstrations, and learned about local historical organizations. Thank you to **Annette Vliet** and **Robert Swan** who represented GWHS at the event, and **Linda Kortz** who prepared the table display. Photo by Annette Vliet.



The Annual Dinner on May 17 attracted 53 people who filled the Wolf Academy to enjoy a meal by Just Fed Catering and an illustrated lecture by Martha Capwell Fox. Thank you to **Abby Spencer** for chairing the event and to **Kathy Silfies** and **Sherry Gillette** for serving the meal. Photo by Kathy Wilhelm.



The Summer Institute of Colonial Crafts offered 9 hands-on classes led by talented artisans. Thank you to **Carol Bear** who coordinated the two day event. Photo by Carol Bear.



## The Bath Portland Cement Company, 1902-1925

East Allen was an agrarian township with 138 farms in 1900. Farmer and farm laborer were the predominant occupations. 248 dwellings sheltered 1,137 residents, all but 26 native born. But change was at hand, and East Allen was about to become home to its first large scale industrial operation.

### Franks Builds A Cement Plant

On Dec. 10, 1902, the Pennsylvania State Department issued a charter to the Bath Portland Cement Company of Easton; the new venture had capital of only \$1000. The man directing this endeavor was Fred B. Franks. Although only 32, he had already built and sold a cement mill near Martins Creek. After attracting investors, in December 1903,

BPCC purchased four farms (320 acres) located northeast of the intersection of present day Rte. 329 and Airport Road. Construction of a modern cement manufacturing facility began almost immediately. Plans called for a

plant constructed of concrete and metal, and featuring a steam power plant with a duplicate electric plant. The stack would be 150 feet tall and the kilns 100 feet long.

Plant construction took about 18 months and production began in July 1905. By November, the company was operating day and night at full capacity. In January 1906, BPCC packed 65,000 barrels, each containing 376 pounds of cement. In November, production reached 3,000 barrels a day. By 1908, BPCC employed 500 men.

The influx of employees created a need for housing and services. A new general merchandise store opened near the plant. BPCC built tenant houses in what was known as East Jacksonville, on current Jacksonville Road. [In 1900, Jacksonville was the intersection of Airport Road and Rte. 329. When the intersection became known as Franks Corner, named for BPCC founder Fred Franks, the Jacksonville name shifted to the company houses to the east.] For recreation, the company organized a baseball team.

### Quarrying Cement

To obtain its cement rock, BPCC operated a large quarry on the property. Indeed, the location of BPCC had been determined by the availability of the raw material. Blasting freed the ore. On April 2, 1908, Mrs. Franks detonated the largest blast in the history of the cement industry up to that time. Workers drilled holes 20 feet from the edge of quarry cliff, 18 feet apart, 70 feet deep, tamped with 20,000 of dynamite. Over 50,000 tons of cement rock were blown loose; the blast

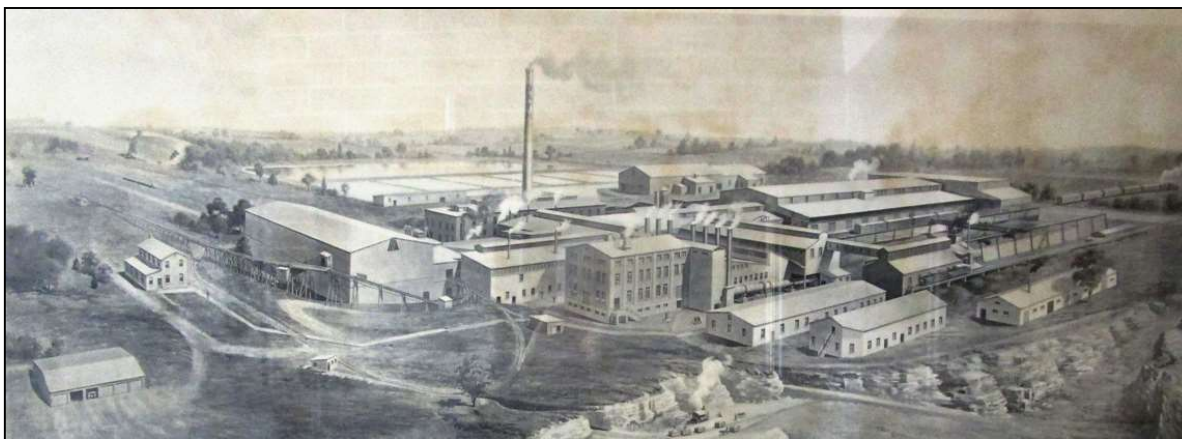
cost between \$3,000 and \$4,000.

In July, Mrs. Franks set off an even larger blast that loosened 100,000 tons of rock. The shock was felt in Easton, 15 miles away. This aggressive blasting was needed to meet a one million barrel order, worth two million dollars, from Havana, Cuba.

### Shareholder Dissention

In November, 1908, feuding shareholders elected a new management team. The losing shareholders charged mismanagement by the new leaders, and in 1910, after a "long and bitter fight marked by acrimonious debate" BPCC shareholders ousted the management and named Fred Franks superintendent and general manager. The fight

wound its way through the court system, until in 1911, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court ruled in favor of the 1908 team. However, perhaps learning a lesson, they retained Franks to run the operation.



A view of the Bath Portland Cement Company showing the extensive plant. Note the 150 foot stack in the center. Courtesy of the Atlas Cement Museum in Northampton.

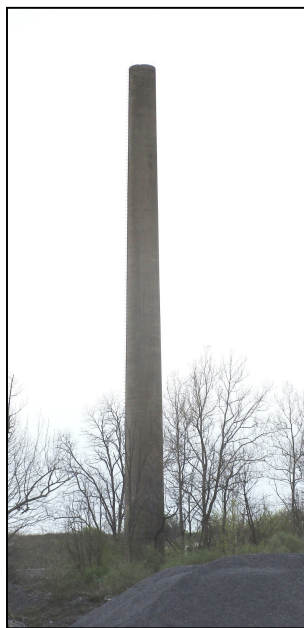
### Growth and Expansion

Despite the boardroom drama, Franks had his mill running efficiently. An October 1912 advertisement solicited 50 new workers from Easton who were advised that they could find steady work at good wages at BPCC. Prospective employees could travel to work by taking a trolley to Nazareth and then Bath. By February 1914, the company declared an 8% dividend and the shareholder factions made peace. The plant was capitalized at one and a half million dollars. Franks, who was lauded for his improvements, was reappointed. The directors authorized building a clinker storage plant, including a traveling crane, with a capacity of 150,000 barrels. The new crane was a modern electric grab bucket model, 80 feet wide and 300 feet long, to handle hot clinker from the kilns and, after cooling, deposit it in the grinding mill.

At the January 1915 annual meeting, Franks was again praised and re-elected general manager. Shareholders agreed to build a new \$150,000 stockhouse that would enable BPCC to manufacture during "dull" periods and store their cement until needed. The directors also approved making a strong effort to secure South American business formerly dominated by Belgium and Germany, but now interrupted by World War I.

### Employee Concerns

In October 1915, more than 40 BPCC employees petitioned the Lehigh and New England Rail-



The BPCC stack is still standing. Photo by Barb Wiemann

*Continued on page 5*

**Bath Portland ....Continued from page 4**

road to resume the discontinued passenger service between Bath and the plant. With winter approaching, walking or bicycling from Bath was not feasible and the men declared that the railroad owed them and the community this route. Service was restored.

**Employee Safety**

Transportation to work was not the only danger. The first reported worker death was in June, 1905, during construction; a workman fell off a wagon and became entangled in the horses' harness. Broken limbs and ribs, amputations, concussions, abrasions and contusion were regularly reported in the local newspapers. After Jacob Hartzell was drawn into a crusher and killed, his widow and two children were awarded \$2,195.47 compensation by a Compensation Board referee.

**Farming Operations**

One type of employee not usually associated with a cement mill was a farmer. The company had purchased over 300 acres of land to insure a reserve of rock for future use. But until needed, the former farms not yet quarried could be put to good use. In 1915, a BPCC help wanted ad sought a farmer who would work 125 good acres for half of the crop. An ad in 1921 specified that BPCC needed someone who could milk cows and "understand" chickens.

**Continued Growth**

The 1916 annual meeting again noted the company's prosperous year and the large contracts in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh; the New York cement was building subways. Due to increasing heavy orders, Sun Shipbuilding of Chester, PA, erected a new engine to power plant operations and BPCC purchased a new steam shovel to remove topping in the quarry. To accommodate new workers, BPCC built four new double frame homes and purchased two more 2 ton auto trucks that were used to transport workers to the plant.

**Firefighting**

A service appreciated by the community was the fire control efforts of BPCC. In October 1916, a fire in Bath was extinguished by a chemical truck from BPCC. In response to a fire in a large stone home one mile south of Bath, BPCC sent a generous corps of men with their first aid equipment. Their good work kept the loss to \$1,000.

**Prosperous Operations**

At the annual shareholders' meeting in 1918, control of the company passed to two Philadelphia investors and Franks, who was named first vice president in charge of operations. The new owners were eager to enlarge the mill and increase output. To do this, Franks set off the largest blast in cement industry history, placing charges 105 feet deep along a 600 foot front in the quarry. Enough rock was loosened to supply the plant for six months. The only deterrent to progress was the influenza epidemic, which shut the plant for a week.

**Professional Recognition**

BPCC continued to make improvements to the plant, attracting

attention from professional groups. Since BPCC was considered one of the finest units ever built, a large contingent of engineers, architects, contractors, and members of the Portland Cement Association came to East Allen in 1919 to tour the plant. The group followed the complete operation from transport of the raw rock from the quarry to packing the finished product; during their tour, the plant manufactured 3000 barrels of cement. After the tour, the visitors journeyed to Allentown to ride the famous concrete William Penn Highway to Easton. In 1922 the Engineers Club of the Lehigh Valley visited BPCC to study the company's waste heat recovery plant.

**Sale and Plant Closing**

As a small, but modern, plant, BPCC was an attractive takeover target by the largest Lehigh Valley cement company, Gen. Harry Trexler's Lehigh Portland Cement Company. In March, 1925, LPCC leased the BPCC plant and assumed operational control. In November, BPCC shareholders voted to dissolve their company. However, in 1930, with reduced demand for cement during the Depression, LPCC closed the plant.



**The only remaining building of the Bath Portland Cement Company is now owned by Keystone Cement Company. Photo by Barb Wiemann**

**The Surprising Next Development**

In what seemed like a very unusual move, almost immediately after disbanding BPCC, Frederick Franks formed a new cement company in 1926 in East Allen. The Keystone Portland Cement Company was located immediately to the east of his previous plant. Why did Franks sell one plant and quickly build another next door? According to industry speculation, Franks realized that he had misjudged the cement rock. The BPCC land contained an inferior cement rock and the best quality rock was just to the east, where Franks sited his new plant.

Thank you to Ed Pany of the Atlas Cement Museum for his advice and to David Reppert of Keystone Cement Company for his assistance locating the BPCC stack and building.

**Bath Portland Cement Company Trivia**

- One of the farms purchased by BPCC in 1903 was William-Brown's estate, which contained the Friendship Tree.
- In 1937, when the cooling basins of the abandoned BPCC were drained by the Lehigh Portland Cement Company and the Pennsylvania Fish Commission, the basins contained thousands of black bass.
- By 1939, Howard A. Shaffer operated an alfalfa dehydrating plant on the site of the former BPCC plant.
- Asa McIlhaney, teacher at the Monocacy School, was employed at BPCC and then LPCC for 12 years (1918-1930). His son-in-law Alexander Newton Gish Sr. was the brother of Mrs. Fred Franks and an assistant superintendent at BPCC.



GOVERNOR WOLF HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
P. O. BOX 134  
BATH, PA 18014

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join online at [www.govwolf.org](http://www.govwolf.org)

**GOVERNOR WOLF HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
MEMBERSHIP FORM**

You can help preserve our community's rich cultural heritage. Return this form with a check payable to Governor Wolf Historical Society. If family, please include all names. Mail to: Governor Wolf Historical Society, P.O. Box 134, Bath PA 18014. Membership is by the calendar year.

Individual \$25.00; Family \$40.00; Student \$10.00  
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**New Museum Acquisition —  
1718 French Map**



by Linda Kortz

The GWHS Museum has acquired a copy of a 1718 French map titled *Carte De La Louisiane Et Du Cours Du Mississippi* (Map of Louisiana and the Course of the Mississippi). It shows the massive land occupied by the Iroquois and the French, plus some other European holdings, including the beginnings of a few states: Nouvelle York, Pensylvanie, New Jersey, Maryland, Virginie, and Caroline. All major rivers and East Coast ports are clearly marked, with a blow-up of the Mississippi Delta and Mobile in the Gulf. These were important to France, as Louisiana and Canada still belonged to the French. The map is on display in the hallway in the Monocacy building.