



The Friends of Rockwood Spring 2010

*You are invited to Friends of Rockwood
Annual Membership Meeting at the
Carriage House*

*Tuesday, May 18th, 2010
7 to 9 PM*

*Matt Davis, U of D graduate student
will speak on*

“Bringing History to Light”

*“(Re) Discovering Thomas Jefferson in the Rockwood Collection”
with introductory remarks by Rebecca Johnson Melvin,
Librarian & Coordinator of the Manuscripts Unit
in Special Collections*

*Jefferson wrote the letter to Dr. Joseph Bringhurst to express his condolences
on the death of John Dickinson, who was a close friend of Dr. Bringhurst.*

RSVP: 302-762-2075

Refreshments



Matthew Davis is a Ph.D. Candidate at the University of Delaware. He received a B.A. in History from the Susquehanna University and a M.A. at the U. of D. in Global Governance. He was born and raised in Zion Grove, Pennsylvania and went to Bloomsburg High School. He and his wife, Lora, currently live in Marshallton, Delaware, just outside of Wilmington.

He is completing his proposal for his dissertation, which is titled *Nationalism in a World of Globalization: Rethinking the Nation-State*. It is an examination of the ways that globalization has been constrained by resistance from nation-states that do not wish to give up their national identities. When he finishes his degree, he plans to stay in academia and become a professor.

Matt is currently researching the Rockwood Museum Archives. A grant from the Friends of Rockwood is helping pay for his research.



UD Library discovers Thomas Jefferson letter

The letter was found in the archives of the Rockwood Museum, which the Library received as a gift from New Castle County earlier this year. Located in Wilmington, the Rockwood Museum is a Victorian house museum, with a conservatory and furnishings from the 19th and 20th centuries.

Graduate students Amanda Daddona and Matt Davis were processing the Rockwood archive, which is huge and diverse, with thousands of documents, maps, letters, photographs, albums, diaries, deeds, business records, ephemera and other items from the 17th century until the late 1970s. It may be assumed that many, if not most, of the older items in the collection have not been examined for several decades or longer.

On Thursday, November 5, they found an original letter written by Thomas Jefferson among the many boxes of unsorted early material of the Bringham family, the original family that owned Rockwood. The Jefferson letter has substantive content with a distinct Delaware connection and was written during the time Jefferson was president.

Sir

Washington, Feb. 24. 08

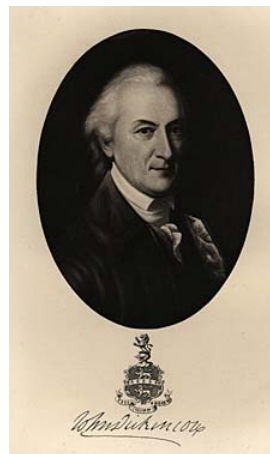
I have to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 16th. It gave me the first information of the death of our distinguished fellow-citizen, John Dickinson. A more estimable man, or truer patriot, could not have left us. Among the first of the advocates for the rights of his country when assailed by Great Britain, he continued to the last the orthodox advocate of the true principles of our new government: and his name will be consecrated in history as one of the great worthies of the revolution. We ought to be grateful for having been permitted to retain the benefit of his counsel to so good an old age; still, the moment of losing it, whenever it arrives, must be a moment of deep felt regret. For himself perhaps a longer period of life was less important, alloyed as the feeble enjoyments of that age are with so much pain: but to his country every addition to his moments was interesting. A junior companion of his labors in the early part of our revolution, it has been a great comfort to me to have retained his friendship to the last moments of his life. Sincerely condoling with his friends on this affecting loss, I beg leave to tender my salutations to yourself & assurances of my friendly respects.

Th. Jefferson

Mr. Joseph Bringhurst



Dr. Joseph Bringhurst,
painted by Robert Fulton
@1785



John Dickinson



**This scene in Mary's room
is an ink and washing drawing
by Robert Fulton.
It was completed about 1785.**

Robert Fulton was a friend of Dr. Joseph Bringham. Fulton painted Dr. Joseph's portraits, which are no longer in our collection. Joseph was a physician who established a medical practice in Wilmington as well as his own pharmacy, which was quite common at that time. Joseph was active in the community and became postmaster in 1802, appointed by President Jefferson and re-appointed by Madison and Monroe up to 1820. He became interested in steam navigation along the Delaware River through his friendship with Fulton.

Joseph married Deborah Ferris, whose third child Edward succeeded him in the drug business. He was a founder of WSFS, director of the Bank of Delaware, and director of the Philadelphia Wilmington and Baltimore Railroad.

From "Rockwood: A Romantic Villa" by Gilbert T. Vincent

Robert Fulton grew up in Lancaster. In 1782, he went to Philadelphia where he learned to draw, design buildings and paint portraits. He had established himself as a miniature painter, and during the next two years he met with a considerable measure of success. He became acquainted with Benjamin Franklin, who not only allowed him to paint his (Franklin's) portrait but also gave him introductions to people of consequence from whom he received commissions. He left for England about 1786, Franklin giving him a letter of introduction to Benjamin West. After having some success in art, he gave it up by 1794 for engineering. Of course, his fame came with canals and steamboats. *H.W. Dickinson 1913*

Nominated Officers and Board Members for 2010-11

President: June Zappa
Vice President: Chris Hutchinson
Treasurer: Doug Wenny
Secretary: Judy Filipkowski

John Cartier
Betty Irwin
Paula Randazzo
Betsy Wenny

Joseph Dell'Olio
Beth Morgera
Viny Randazzo
Rick Zappa

Donna Fox
Nancy Schanes
Paul Stoffer

John Cartier, current 8th district New Council County Councilman and resident of Holly Oak, is a great supporter of historic architecture, especially along Philadelphia Pike.

Judy Filipkowski has been a docent at Rockwood for since 1992 and has been on the FOR board since 1999. She was a teacher in Phila School system for 30 years, retiring in 1997, She received a M.S. in Social History from Temple University in 1991. She is the editor of the FOR newsletter.

Donna Fox, an active docent at Rockwood for 5 years. She retired from DuPont after 32 years in 2004. She has been a board member for 1 year.

Joseph M. Dell'Olio, recently retired from Child Inc. where he served for 35 years as its Executive Vice-President. Prior positions include Executive Director of Delaware Criminal Justice Council and Executive Director of Delaware Center for Justice. He has a Master's of Science in Criminology from Florida State University.

Chris Hutchinson became a volunteer in 1983 for the ICF & worked for the next 18 on the board—volunteering with parking, ice cream, beer & cigar festivals, bartending and president for the past four years. He is a sales and management executive experienced in sales, human resources and business administration. He is an enthusiastic motivator and creative problem solver

Betty Irwin is a retired RN from Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania with a BS in Health Science from West Chester State University. She served in Peace Corps in Guatemala after retiring and is past president of the Returned Peace Corps of Delaware. She has been a docent or board member at Rockwood since 1996, was a volunteer at the Museum of Natural History in Philadelphia, and is currently the board archivist for the Alumni Association of HUP.

Beth Morgera has been a Docent for 6 years and recently joined the Board of Directors. She is a native Delawarean and grew up in Arden. She is a graduate of the University of Delaware and works in the insurance industry as an adjuster. Beth came to Rockwood because she loves the Victorian era and enjoys sharing this passion with visitors. The Board of the Friends of Rockwood have recently elected Beth as our new Membership Chairman,

Paula Randazzo is President of Preferred Sites Inc., a local computer support and web design company, joined the FOR Board in 2007. She designed, created and maintains the FOR website.

Viny Randazzo has over 35 years of IT experience. He created the FOR membership application and serves as photographer for FOR events. He has been a FOR Board member since 2007.

Paul Stoffer is a transplanted Delaware resident coming from Indiana and arriving on the banks of the Brandywine Wilmington DE in 1963. he went to college at Indiana University --the real IU in Bloomington, Indiana. He has a MBA also from IU and a law degree from University of Maryland. He's had numerous employers, retired in 2000. He joined Rockwood's board 5 years ago and served as president.

Nancy Schanes has resigned as Membership Chairman after many years of outstanding service and is a board member and docent. She welcomes the opportunity to work with Beth as we transition the job during the next few months. Nancy is our specialist on the genealogy of the Rockwood family and is an active member of the Delaware Genealogical Society.

Betsy Wenny –has a BA Earlham College and was a teacher for 26 years (pre-school to Grade 6 - mix of public & Montessori - PA, CA, DE). She retired from Winterthur Museum after 6 years as Supervisor of Front Desk Visitor Services. She also worked at Rockwood as a weekend manager for a couple of years before 1999.

Doug Wenny has an M.A. in French from UCLA and taught high school French for 31 years. After teaching he worked at a local bank for five years. He is the former president and treasurer of the Delaware Genealogical Society, he has been FOR treasurer and board member since May 2006.

June Zappa is Operational Manager and Systems Analyst for the Zappa family businesses. She was the Tea Manager at Rockwood before the museum closed for renovations in 1999. She has been on the board for ten years.

Rick Zappa is our legal consultant and board member for many years.



Greetings from Chris Hutchinson:

I hope you are all surviving this winter and all this snow. Makes me wish I had a bought a snow blower and not the roto-till. There is no way to convert it. But here we are in March and my daffodils are starting to break ground. Spring is just around the corner. Hang in there.

I wanted to give you an overview on what is happening with The Friends and the Conservatory. We received the preliminary building assessment from John Milner Associates. The report gave a synopsis of the current conditions and recommendations for immediate, short term and long term work. We have formed a committee and are going to begin the restoration in the spring. We will do it in stages so we can fund raise through the process. That is why we would love for you to attend our fund raisers.

We are having our annual meeting on Tuesday night, May 18th from 7-9 pm. This is something new. We always have had them on a Saturday in June, but we decided a change was in store to see if we could get more people to attend. We will instill the new slate of officers. We will also have the grad students from The University of Delaware talk to us about the research they have been doing on the archives including the Thomas Jefferson letter.

You can keep abreast of what is happening by visiting our web site.
www.friendsofrockwood.org



VOLUNTEERS! We are looking for a few dedicated Friends to help with:

Public Relations Grant writing Special Events & Teas Garden Lovers
Museum Guides Garden Guides Office Help
Contact info@friendsofrockwood.org or 302-762-2075

Rockwood
“Our Connection to Our Past”
Hy Myers, Architectural Historian
February 2010

Although the American Revolutionary War was fought to separate the peoples of the future United States from the tyranny of the English Crown, the English culture had already been implanted in Americans. That culture continued to flourish in the United States long after the separation, and it continued into the 19th century. For example, the Englishman's interest in gardening, and in having his own cultivated plot related to his own home, was part of that culture. This idea was expanded when in the mid 19th century construction of *glass houses* became possible and further developed that horticultural interest to all seasons. This was especially true in the larger English country houses built during the mid 19th century. This rich horticultural heritage spread to America with the arrival of the nouveau rich. These wealthy immigrants sought a bit of home in the new climate of America, and those newly rich Americans copied their English cousins' arts and industry, when they could afford the costs of heating these glass houses. Having your own greenhouse, attached to your own house, became such a huge development in the United States that major new large companies were created – like Pierson and Lord & Burnham – to cater to that interest. For the next one hundred years from 1850-1950 these firms prospered before the cost of heating fuel increased so much that it became generally prohibitive to maintain these facilities during America's long winters.

Rockwood's greenhouse was a very early development of this year-round interest in horticulture in America, in this case adapted from Scotland by a Scottish architect from Edinburgh. As one of America's earliest of such attached conservatories, their conservatory established the owners of Rockwood as sophisticated, fashionable, American immigrants, with an interest in the beauties of exotic horticulture, and the means to maintain such a rich life style.

tier

Introduced by: Councilman John J. Car-
Date: November 24, 2009

RESOLUTION 09-

**HONORING THE FRIENDS OF ROCKWOOD WITH THE NEW CASTLE COUNTY
COUNCIL VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARD**

WHEREAS, the purpose of the New Castle County Council Volunteer Service Award is to recognize, thank and reward volunteers for service to our community which has benefited all citizens of New Castle County; and

WHEREAS, the mission of The Friends of Rockwood is to enhance and support the educational, historical, and horticultural benefits of Rockwood Museum for the citizens of New Castle County; to assist New Castle County by supporting educational programming not only on site but also at various places in the Delaware Valley; to encourage volunteerism on site, help with the preservation and conservation of the collection and allow New Castle County to use their 501(c)3 designation when applying for grants which may not be available to government entities; and,

WHEREAS, in 1974, the executors of the estate of Nancy Sellers Hargraves gifted the Rockwood Manor House to New Castle County. New Castle County accepted the obligation of preserving the historical, aesthetic, and cultural character of Rockwood and of providing an example of Victorian life in Delaware to area residents and visitors through a museum setting; and,

WHEREAS, in 1977, The Friends of Rockwood was incorporated to support the County in its effort to preserve and maintain Rockwood; and,

WHEREAS, one of the first actions of the Friends was to raise funds to purchase and conserve the original collection of furniture, accessories, textiles, books, letters, and photographs which had been left in the manor house ; and,

WHEREAS, the current focus is to raise the funds needed to repair The Conservatory, which ,built is 1852, is the oldest surviving conservatory attached to a dwelling in the United States; and,

WHEREAS, the Friends of Rockwood continue to sponsor a variety of special events, and provide volunteer staff to assist with museum projects and programs. All of The Friends' activities are geared toward increasing visibility, strengthening community support, and providing financial growth for continued efforts.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: by and for the Council of New Castle County that Friends of Rockwood are recognized and honored for their continued service and achievements by receiving the New Castle County Council Volunteer Service Award

Adopted by the County
Council
Of New Castle County



Thanks to Carolyn Roland, FOR member for the lovely pictures of our annual holiday party that was held on Saturday, December 12th, 2009. There were 31 members in attendance who had a wonderful time enjoying all of the food and beverages.

We had a chance to see the slide show that was created by Judy Filipkowski and Donna Fox and sold six of them. The rest are available at the gift shop for a suggested donation of \$5 (more is welcome since the profits go to the conservatory fund).

Late Eighteenth Century Courtship

Sentiments expressed by Joseph Bringhurst (grandfather of Edward, Jr.) to Debby Ferris. They addressed each other as the Renaissance lovers Petrarch and Laura in their correspondence. Joseph and Debby were married July 11, 1799.

“O! my friend – inimitable woman! Thou has almost overpower’d me!” 3/12/1795

“O! my friend how shall I describe to thee my feelings of last night.....My heart glowed within me – my soul, tho calm, was transported with joy. Surely I have tasted of such pleasures as departed spirits enjoy in the worlds of Heaven. As long as thou continues to esteem me worthy of thou friendship life will me dear to me.....How poor! How frail are words! – no language could have spoken my feelings! – I cannot now describe them – silence – eloquent silence! Be thou my interpreter!” 4/21/1795

“How art thou my lovely friend?.....Not for one hour, since thy departure, hast thou been absent from my mind. Thy image, shall I dare to speak out?, is continuously before me. I see thee wherever I move – but I stretch forth my hand and thou art gone. I thank my imagination sometimes for the deception, but my disappointment, when I put out my hand makes me feel more strongly the lofs of the reality. Ah my excellent friend, my more than sister, thou knowest the height of my esteem, thy fervor of my affection for the lovely Laura.” 4/25/1795

“How, my friend, shall I speak to thee of my late visit? Ah! How incapable is this pen of recording the feelings of my heart, the emotions & sentiments of my soul while I enjoyed thy society!...Surely it does not fall to the lot of mortals in general to enjoy such unutterable delight as thou hast lately given me.....If Human Being was ever, on earth, rapturously happy, thou hast made me so – “ 5/3/1795

“He who formed Human Beings breathed into them a soul which requires the nourishment of social affection & tendernefs. I was not born to be shut out from society, from friendship, from love. The ardor, the energy of my affections affect my whole frame, & when directed to my Laura they become almost ungovernable. At this moment my throbbing heart looks forward with hope to the confirmation of its wishes.....Will my charming friend, my Laura suffer me to look forward with a hope that her friendship will blefs my future years, that we shall travel the journey of life hand in hand?” 5/8/1795

“Surely no human being has ever been dearer to a mortal before than my Laura is to my heart! Ah! How tenderly pafionate how ardent & pure is that affection which thou hast kindled in my heart, which thou hast breathed into my soul!....I now feel that my noble Laura is absolutely necefsary to my happinefs –.....Yes my beloved, my dearest friend thy image is imprefsed forever upon my heart, thy virtues live in my soul – thou art dearer to me than my own life....I am ready to stretch out my arms to keep thee to my beating bosom, to whisper the pure & tender sentiments of my soul in thy friendly ear...” 5/29/1795

“I am pleased because I love you & wish you to love me” 5/30/1795

“Believe me when I tell thee that I love thee with unspeakable tendernefs & that my esteem equals my affection.” 6/21/1795

“I wish I could instantly create wings – or have the faculty of conveying myself speedily from one place to another – I should at this moment fly Millanium & clasp my Laura in my arms...” 7/15/1795

Compiled by Robin Goldstein 1/29/2010

The length of these letters ran to many pages and 14 pages was not unusual, even when multiple letters were written a day. Keep in mind that the cost of paper was expensive and only the well to do had the time to correspond so voluminously. The Bringhurst-Ferris letters focused chiefly on philosophy, religion and family. They were sent via boat or by post. The envelopes simply stated Joseph Bringhurst, Jr., Philadelphia or Debby Ferris, Wilmington, with no further street address.



Bessie Bringhurst Galt Smith spent many years at Kilwaughter Castle in Ireland.

Last summer, Sara Ferguson and her daughter, Mary, came to visit Rockwood from Virginia. Sara's grandfather bought items from Bessie when she left Ireland about 1920. He was getting married and wanted household articles for his home.

Sara's father bought Kilwaughter in 1980 from Galt Smith's cousins who were not interested in the property. He was interested in preserving Kilwaughter. It was in very poor condition and so far, he has not been able to do anything with the property.

There is a limestone quarry nearby and if it is expanded, the blasting could destroy what is left of the castle.

Sara was very interested in reading Bessie's letters and wished she had more time to spend at the Historical Society, where the letters had been stored until recently.

Beth Morgera
Rockwood Docent

*The Friends of Rockwood
610 Shipley Road
Wilmington, Delaware 19809*

HELP US SAVE POSTAGE.....

We would like to have your e-mail address so we may send you notices about upcoming events and the Newsletter.

If you no longer wish to receive this Information, e-mail Beth Morgera, Membership Chair, ETMorgera@msn.com or the Friends address on this newsletter.

Please put FOR in the subject box.
so it won't get deleted.

Thanks very much.