

GROVE GAZETTE

Historic Locust Grove

561 Blankenbaker Lane

Louisville, KY 40207

(502) 897-9845

www.locustgrove.org



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Bob Smith Spirit Award Winner

Ask **Bob Smith** what he does at Locust Grove and he'll quietly reply, "I give tours, hang out in the woodshop, and do the Woodworking Camp with **Fred Atkinson**."

What he doesn't say is what every volunteer who's worked with Bob knows — that his gentle ways and soft-spoken words combine with a great deal of expertise about the importance of woodworking and carpentry in early Kentucky.

That's why the Volunteer Steering Committee selected Bob as this quarter's winner.

School children stand attentively as Bob tells how a pitchfork was crafted and gasp in awe as he demonstrates the "sissy board" when using a sharp draw knife.

A Louisville native, Bob grew up in St. Matthews and graduated from Bellarmine with a major in history. He moved to Cleveland for about five years, where he married his wife **Jane**. Soon after their marriage, the Smiths returned to Louisville to stay.

Both Bob and Jane have always been interested in history and have been volunteering at Locust Grove for 11 years.

Bob is a regular docent on Monday mornings, leading tours through the historic house museum and outbuildings. On other days, he'll play the role of Woodworker during "Craft Sampler" school tours and special events, such as the 18th Century Market Fair and Candlelight tours in December.



Stop by Locust Grove's museum shop and you could purchase a carved wooden spoon or other items crafted by Bob.

Locust Grove is not the only beneficiary of Bob's expertise and knowledge. He's been a volunteer with Habitat for Humanity for more than 20 years and volunteers at the Frazier International History Museum and the Ronald McDonald House.

Thanks, Bob, for everything!

Yearly Events Mark Your Calendars!

Afternoon Lecture Series

1:00 p.m. — the first Wednesday of the month (except January and May).

Two Used Book Sales

Great book bargains abound during the second weekend in March and last weekend in August.

18th Century Thunder

Our Revolutionary War Encampment — held the Saturday and Sunday of "Thunder Weekend" in April.

Gardeners' Fair & Auction

Friday, Saturday, Sunday — held the second weekend in May.

Mothers' Day Brunch

Sunday during the Gardeners' Fair. *Reservations required.*

Two Antiques Markets

Held on the last Sunday in June and in September.

18th Century Market Fair

Held Saturday and Sunday on the last weekend in October.

Holiday Candlelight Tours

Costumed interpreters in the house and out-buildings on Friday and Saturday in early December.

GROVE GAZETTE

From the Director's Desk

Carol Ely, Ph.D., *Executive Director*

As the entire Locust Grove community and much of the region must know by now, we've unveiled our newly restored interior of the 1790s Croghan house.

From re-wiring through re-plastering, painting, papering, refinishing the woodwork, laying carpets, re-assessing the furniture, and moving, repairing, replacing, reupholstering, and generally rethinking the entire collection — it has been quite a year of change.

The results are brilliant — literally. We've seen how light has come into the house through the new, brighter colors and reflective surfaces that people in the early 19th century preferred. Warmth and color

have returned; and with them, the sense that this was a home.

The contexts and proportions are right — literally and metaphorically. It's now William Croghan's home — his taste, his choices, his experiences. George Rogers Clark is there as an honored member of the household, with his space reflecting his interests and his experiences.

We've been placing signs of the presence of Locust Grove's slaves in the house, ready to be talked about. We'll change the rooms seasonally or to note events in the lives of the Croghans and Clark, such as when the girls packed for school, or the new French dishes arrived.

A few more elements are on order and will be placed in the coming year — new upholstery, a rug for the stairs, the carpet for the Great Parlor on the second floor, more furnishings for "Dr. John's Room" on the third floor.

So what's next at Locust Grove?

We're going both wider and deeper. Deeper into the lives of the people on the site, through expanded research and programming on their lives and work. Wider on the site itself, with renewed attention to the outbuildings, gardens, fields, and woods.

We have 55 acres, and stories to tell about the economic life of an early Kentucky farm and its relationship to the neighborhood developing around it.

Change, as always, was and is a constant at Locust Grove.

Carol Ely



General George Rogers Clark's Apartment on the first floor.



The first floor hallway — with a stylish painted floor cloth, wallpaper, and the fashionable verdigris wall treatment.



The second floor's Great Parlor, with an exact reproduction of the Croghans' wallpaper.



The Dining Room with the punkah over the table.



The Farm Office, with its highly prized verdigris wall treatment.

Photos by Courtney Novack

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561 Blankenbaker Lane
Louisville, KY 40207
(502) 897-9845
(502) 896-2433
www.locustgrove.org

The mission of Historic Locust Grove, Inc. is to preserve and interpret the 55-acre site, with its circa 1790 house and out-buildings, the collection, and the gardens, as an example of early 19th century frontier America.

It is also our mission to share the stories of the many people who contributed to the history of Locust Grove, emphasizing the life of General George Rogers Clark, Revolutionary War hero and founder of the city of Louisville.

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Grove Gazette

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Other photography: Bob Boone,
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Getting to Know Locust Grove's Costumed Interpreters

Linda Parsons is Sarah Taylor



Who is your character?

I have portrayed Sarah Pannill Dabney Strother Taylor since Candlelight in 2004. Sarah was the wife of Richard Taylor and the mother of Zachary Taylor, who would become the nation's 12th President. The Taylors' farm, Springfield, was "next door" to Locust Grove.

How did you get involved in costumed interpreting at HLG?

A couple years earlier, my granddaughters and I took the Candlelight tour. The girls, Leigh and Abby Flynn, were dressed up in their velvet dresses and were enchanted with Candlelight, as was I.

The girls and I had delightful conversations with some of the interpreters. After returning for another Candlelight in 2003, we signed up. A few months later, Mandy "Lucy Croghan" Dick invited us to an interpreters'

meeting; we took the training and were ready to go in 2004.

No one had been portraying any of the Taylor family — who were great friends of the Croghans. As Sarah was in my "age group," that's who I became.

Describe your character.

Sarah was born in December 1760 in Rapidan, Orange County, Virginia. She married Richard Taylor and lived in Virginia during the Revolution while her husband fought in the war.

After the war, when Richard received his land grant in Kentucky, they moved to Louisville. They had eight children, many similar in ages to the Croghan children. Since they lived just down the road from Locust Grove, the children were schooled and played with the Croghan children. Lucy and Sarah became very close friends.

What do you do to make Sarah come to life?

I always have a great time visiting with my dear friend, Lucy Croghan. I usually bring my knitting and can be found in the parlor helping the young girls with their needlework, fixing their hair, and teaching them manners.

I especially enjoy dancing in the Great Parlor upstairs. When the music starts, I'm ready to go! Lucy and I also banter back and forth, teasing each other. She agrees that my cook makes

the best vinegar pie, and she's always trying to get the recipe. But I won't give it to her.

How do you research your character?

I found a book on Zachary Taylor, which had a lot of information about his family as well as his parents. Costumed interpreter Jamie "Owen Gwathmey" Eiler has found quite a bit of information about my Taylor family, which always helps me talk to visitors.

What are some of the things that make this costumed interpreting such fun?

A couple young boys came in as I was talking to a group of people in the master bedroom. After the other visitors left, one of the boys said, "I know who you are! You used to be my Sunday School teacher!" It took me by surprise and it was really hard to stay in character — but I did.

Then, a couple years ago, a lady was talking to me in the ballroom. I asked her if she had met Lucy, the lady of the house. She answered that she had seen her — and couldn't believe she was still alive! It was really hard not to laugh.

Candlelight truly is the highlight of the year for me, and I love the dancing. I also enjoyed being a part of the Lewis & Clark Homecoming back in 2006. Actually, I enjoy every event at Locust Grove. I truly love this place.

Open House, Symposium Celebrate Locust Grove's Exciting Transformation

The last weekend in June marked a milestone for Locust Grove's historic house museum — the grand opening of the brilliant restoration of the interior of the house built in the 1790s and originally restored and furnished in the 1960s.



Some 760 people streamed into the newly restored Locust Grove on a hot and humid Saturday during the Open House.

During the past two years, historians and experts at Locust Grove and from around the country have researched and investigated the history and appearance of the house and the lives of its occupants. This new “old” look is the result — the restoration of the original paint colors, historic wallpapers, floor coverings, and more. And it includes new interpretations of the uses of the rooms by the Croghan family, George Rogers Clark, and the rest of the extended household.



Costumed interpreter **Bonny Wise** with visitors during the Open House.

The celebration actually began on Thursday with a gala reception for about 160 Locust Grove

members, friends, and others who contributed to the restoration in time, support, or expertise. On Friday, 81 people gathered for a symposium that focused on the many elements of the restoration. It was filled with fascinating stories and amazing explanations of all the research and craftsmanship that went into this newest restoration:

Samuel Thomas, the house's first caretaker who lived on site during the 1960s restoration, showed photos of the existing conditions and described the detective work that fed the decisions made during that restoration. His stories of the discovery of the Great Parlor wallpaper fragments and other revelations helped us understand the initial restoration that we've known for 50 years.

Gwynne Potts, chair of the Restoration Committee, described William Croghan's background and the social and architectural influences he experienced in Ireland, Virginia, Philadelphia, and elsewhere. This research informed the committee's ideas about the choices Croghan might have made and the ways in which the House reflects his experiences.

Rabbit Goody, of Thistle Hill Weavers, made many of the rugs, bed coverings, upholstery, and other textiles for the restoration. She talked about how decisions about textiles are made and brought along samples of textiles and rugs from the period which she uses in her research.

Steve Larson, of Adelphi Paper Hangings, showed photos of the meticulous and laborious process of creating the amazingly detailed, hand-printed Arabesque wallpaper now in our Great Parlor.

Carol Ely, HLG executive director, spoke about the re-interpretation of the rooms and their functions and how it parallels the physical changes — an effort to use the refurbishing as a reflection of the lives of its inhabitants in time and space.

Scott Erbes, curator of Decorative Arts at the Speed Art Museum, tied all the presentations together with a look at the history of historic house museums, and their role today in the public understanding and appreciation of past lives.

It was invigorating, exciting, and oh, so rewarding.

Did You Know...?

Locust Grove's Dining Room now features a “punkah,” otherwise known as a “shoo-fly.” This is a device to keep the flies off the food (in an age without window screens), and perhaps provide a bit of a cooling breeze. (See photo on cover.)

Ours is a reconstruction based on an 1814 letter describing “a series of small flags suspended from the ceiling at Locust Grove.” A slave boy pulled on a cord to keep it in motion.

Such devices were rare in the early 19th century, and are unknown elsewhere in Kentucky. Known American examples of shoo-flies were constructed as a single wooden paddle, and could not be described as “small flags.”

So what did ours *look* like? A query to an email discussion group for museum professionals located a punkah expert, **Dana Byrd**, from Yale University.



Image from Colonial Williamsburg.

She sent us this period image from the library of Colonial Williamsburg that showed a festive meal under “a series of small flags.” We based our reconstruction on that image.

The concept and the word “punkah” originated in India, and were brought to the Americas through port cities such as New Orleans.

William Croghan was one of the few Kentuckians licensed to trade with Spanish-controlled New Orleans, and likely one of the first to realize the appeal of this new bit of technology. However, he would probably have referred to it as a “shoo-fly” rather than a “punkah.”

And now you know.

2010 FIRST WEDNESDAY LECTURE SERIES

This year's theme is "American Revolutions: How Society Changed During the Revolutionary Era." Lectures are held on the first Wednesday of each month, except for January and May. Desserts and beverages are served at 1:00 p.m., with the lecture immediately following. Admission is \$5, or \$3 for Friends of Locust Grove.

BOUND FOR THE PROMISED LAND: KENTUCKY'S EARLY SETTLERS

Wednesday, September 1, 1:00 p.m.



"Daniel Boone Escorting Settlers Through The Cumberland Gap" by George Caleb Bingham, 1851-52. From Wikimedia Commons.

Kentucky was the first state west of the Appalachian Mountains. To early settlers who followed Daniel Boone through the Cumberland Gap, it was a mythical land of milk and honey. Land disputes and harsh frontier life were the reality; but while the myth lasted, thousands came to Kentucky for economic opportunity, open spaces, and the sheer joy of the gamble. It was truly the first American frontier.

Join **Dr. John Kleber**, professor emeritus at Moorhead State University and editor of *The Kentucky Encyclopedia* and *The Encyclopedia of Louisville*. He will explore who came here, why they came, where they settled, and what changes they wrought.

MR. THOMPSON'S NEIGHBORHOOD: FROM VIRGINIA TO KENTUCKY AND LOUISIANA

Wednesday, October 6, 1:00 p.m.



Jim Holmberg

Jim Holmberg, curator of special collections at the Filson Historical Society, brings to life the fascinating letters of John Thompson, who moved his family to Kentucky from Virginia, in the mid-1790s. He quickly became involved in the business and social life of the neighborhood, where the Croghans, Taylors, and others were all friends.

In 1805, Thompson moved to Louisiana to take a federal appointment. Not knowing if it would be a permanent move, his beloved wife "Betsey" remained in Kentucky with the children. Amazingly, many of their letters still exist. These letters document, in part, their lives and experiences over almost 30 years. They provide a poignant window through which we can glimpse love, marital relations, family dynamics, and life in Kentucky and Louisiana more than 200 years ago.

LOCUST GROVE/SLOW FOOD PICNIC

Sunday, August 22, 11:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Locust Grove could be called the original home of "slow food." The hearth kitchen, smoke house, and dairy make it the perfect location to celebrate local food and farming at this third annual Locust Grove/Slow Food



Family Picnic. The popular "Cast-Iron Chef" event returns this year, where chefs will prepare their dishes in cast-iron cookware over an open fire. And we're adding a new competition for "The Best Dessert Made With Local Fruit."

We're encouraging local growers to swap plants, produce, and seeds. Local chefs will prepare locally grown foods for your picnic lunch, or you can bring your own picnic basket. We'll have talks and demonstrations on a variety of subjects — including how to raise chickens in your backyard, how to make cheese, and how to smoke meats. Admission: \$5 per car, with bikers and walkers free. Includes a tour of the recently restored circa 1790s house museum and gardens.



SUMMER USED BOOK SALE

Friday through Sunday, August 27 through 29,
10:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Our popular Used Book Sale returns for a late summer session. We have books on all subjects — from history to fiction, children's to mystery, antiquarian books, art, science, literature, and so much more. We'll have about 10,000 books — all of them donated by avid readers and Locust Grove friends. Most books are priced at \$2 for hardbacks and \$1 and under for paperbacks. Some books are specially priced, but always a value.



We accept donations of used books at *any* time of the year. Just drop them off at the Visitors' Center during regular business hours, or if you need help to get your books here, call 502-897-9845 and we'll pick them up.

Historic Locust Grove
CALENDAR

SPECIAL TOURS

The tours are at regular prices. Space is limited, so reservations are strongly suggested. Please call 502-897-9845 to assure your participation.

HISTORIC LOCUST GROVE'S RESTORATION

Sunday, September 12, 1:15 p.m.

HLG Executive Director **Carol Ely** will describe the two years of intensive scientific and historic research that went into Locust Grove's brilliant restoration — along with stories of what we learned about the Croghans' life at Locust Grove.

HLG'S DECORATIVE ARTS AND FURNITURE

Sunday, October 17, 1:15 p.m.

Local historian and Locust Grove docent **Lynn Renau** will share delightful facts and tell some great stories about the early 19th century decorative arts and furniture in the newly restored Locust Grove house museum.

FALL ANTIQUES MARKET

Sunday, September 26, 10:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.



Professional antiques dealers from the South and Midwest display their wares on the lawn at Historic Locust Grove. The show features American country antiques, formal furniture, jewelry, textiles, silver,

and much more. Admission: \$6 for adults, \$3 for children 6-12, free for children 5 and under. Includes tours of the historic house museum. Concessions will be available. Proceeds support the continued operation and preservation of Historic Locust Grove.

18TH CENTURY MARKET FAIR

**Saturday and Sunday, October 30 and 31
10:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.**



Step back two centuries to a time when people gathered to trade goods, socialize, and be entertained.



Shop for

18th century goods — such as blankets, soaps, candles, and pottery — great for today's living, too! Enjoy hearty fare, sweets, and drinks typical of the late 1700s. Tour the American, British, and Native American encampments. Admission: \$6 for adults, \$3 for children aged 6 to 12, and free for children 5 and under. Admission includes a tour of the historic house museum and is good for both days.

B. Preston Thomas, M.D. – 2010 Pilkington Award Winner



One of Locust Grove's most active board members and unflagging volunteers is the 2010 winner of the Audrey Pilkington Lifetime Achievement Award. This award recognizes volunteers who have offered a lifetime of dedication and support to Historic Locust Grove.

Preston Thomas has been volunteering at Locust Grove for more than 13 years — doing anything that needs doing, from taking admissions and parking cars to working on the trash patrol during special events.

Preston has served as HLG's Board President, Secretary, and twice as Treasurer. When Locust Grove was finalizing its search for a new Executive Director in early 2004, he stepped in as "Acting Director" for several months.

But it was his precision and attention to detail while serving as HLG's treasurer that Executive Director Carol Ely cited as invaluable to Locust Grove. "He keeps us on the path of prudence and virtue, fiscally and ethically responsible in all areas — but in the nicest possible way," she says.

"Preston is devoted, insightful, and hides a very perceptive mind under a quiet demeanor," Carol adds. "I can't imagine — nor do I ever want to imagine — Locust Grove without Preston Thomas."

Preston joins a distinguished roster of Pilkington Award winners since 1998, when the award was created by the Volunteer Steering Committee.

New 'President's Award' Honors Extra Efforts That Benefit HLG

In 2009, HLG Board President **Gwynne Potts** created an award to honor people for their extra (usually unpaid) efforts to make the site and organization work. "If we had to pay for the services these people provide, or were without the income from these events, HLG would be deeply in debt," says Gwynne. "But we're not. And it's thanks to the extra efforts of these 2009 and 2010 President's Award Winners."

2009 Winners:

- **Charlie Bartman** — leadership of Used Book Sales
- Metro Louisville 16th District Councilman **Kelly Downard**
- **LaMar Gaston** and **Norma Adams** — running of Gardeners' Fairs
- **Mary Lou "Lulu" Johnston** — all-around grounds volunteer
- **Diane Statler** — leadership with antiques events

2010 Winners:

- **Lynn Swetnam Boone** — coordination of Used Book Sales
- **Mary Hancock** — leadership to replace the allee dogwoods
- **Kevin Hereford** — coordination of House restoration contractors
- Publishers Printing's **Nick Simon** — reduced/free fees for printing
- **Preston Thomas** — untiring efforts as HLG treasurer
- Metro Parks' **Aubrey Tierney** — unflinching attention to our grounds
- **Jeannie Litterst Vezeau** — *Grove Gazette* and other projects



The 2010 winners attending the awards presentation on June 21 are (from the left) Kevin Hereford, Lynn Swetnam Boone, HLG Board President Gwynne Potts, Jeannie Litterst Vezeau, and Preston Thomas.

In The Museum Store

The exciting restoration of the historic house museum has inspired new products in Locust Grove's Museum Store. Currently on hand are mugs imprinted with the spectacular "1776" wallpaper now hanging in George Rogers Clark's Apartment on the first floor. We've also designed a collection of lovely note cards with that same wallpaper pictured on the front. And you can "own a piece of Locust Grove" when you purchase a paperweight with a piece of the wallpaper that hung in the "Ballroom" — now called the Great Parlor — for nearly 50 years. Visitors' Center Manager **Jennifer Jansen** adds that all jewelry will be 20 percent off for the entire month of August.



Many Thanks to Our Donors

Many thanks to the hundreds of people who support Historic Locust Grove through various kinds of donations. We depend upon and deeply appreciate your generosity and involvement. Thanks to the following people for their most recent donations.

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Jeannie & John Vezeau

Volunteer 'Special Awards' Bring Smiles to All

The Volunteer Steering Committee presents special awards to recognize volunteers who have had unusual experiences with visitors or have performed over and above expectations. The 2010 winners include:

Saves the Day:

Lulu Johnston — who organized and ran concessions for the Antiques Fair at the last minute.

Makes Great Goodies:

Laurie Diebold — who brings in *homemade* brownies every Friday.



The "Special Award" winners at the volunteer recognition party in April are (from the left) Jay Paxton, Jane Smith, and Bob Boone.

Handyman:

Jay Paxton — for so many construction and repair projects at Locust Grove.

Dedication/Extreme Priorities:

Jane Smith — who was struck by a truck in a parking lot. As she waited for an ambulance, she said to her husband, "This can't happen now! It's time for the book sale and I need to be there to work on it!"

Unusual Encounter with Visitor:

Bob Boone — who, while working at the Used Book Sale, was commenting on a book about mail-order brides when a man said to him, "I've got a beautiful mail-order bride from Colombia."

Friends of Locust Grove

Enrollment/Renewal from April 1 through July 1, 2010

A hearty "thank you" to all of these people who recently joined or renewed their memberships, and to all of our longtime Friends of Locust Grove! If you'd like to become a Friend, please go online to www.locustgrove.org, or call us at (502) 897-9845 for further information and details.

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Historic Locust Grove membership is included with Society donations.

Illinois Regiment Society

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To Become a Friend

Yearly memberships in the Friends of Locust Grove are available in three categories:

Individual — \$35

Family — \$50

Student — \$15

For membership information and details, please call us at (502) 897-9845

Jane Austen's Works Help Illustrate Life at the Croghans' Locust Grove

Ladies strolling the grounds in high-waisted summer frocks holding lacy parasols to shade their heads. Gentlemen striding along in high collars under vests and short jackets above tight-waisted trousers.



No, it isn't 1810 at Locust Grove, but the atmosphere would have been quite familiar to Lucy and William Croghan and family. The occasion is the third annual Jane Austen Festival, presented by the Louisville chapter of the Jane Austen Society of North America (JASNA) in conjunction with Historic Locust Grove. Only three such festivals exist: in Australia, in England, and here at Locust Grove.

It's no coincidence that the styles and social structure described in Jane Austen's novels reflect what was going on in the U.S. in the early 1800s. Jane Austen died a year before George Rogers Clark. Her novels were published during the time that Clark was living at Locust Grove.

"The world of Jane Austen was in some ways the English counterpart of the world of William Croghan," says **Carol Ely**, HLG executive director. "Regency England and Federal America had much in common socially, materially, and in the changing social structure and challenges of a modernizing world. Through the works of Austen, the lives of women, particularly, are illuminated. Her works offer a window into a time that otherwise seems remote to us today."

The Louisville Chapter of the Jane Austen Society began with a conversation between Carol and **Bonny Wise**, HLG's PR/marketing coordinator and "a long-time fan of anything Regency." They were commenting on how often they referred to the novels of Jane Austen to give visitors a visual cue about what the Croghans' world was like.

"I recalled hearing about JASNA, and learned from its website that there was no chapter in our area," says Bonny. "I suggested that we form one here, and Carol agreed. In July 2007, 36 Jane Austen fans attended our first meeting. We now have more than 90 members in the region."

There is much affinity between the JASNA group and Locust Grove. Although the Louisville JASNA chapter is a separate organization, they hold most of their meetings at Locust Grove. The chapter contributes to the overall organization of Locust Grove, specifically to support activities of the costumed interpreters. It enhances programs such as the Candlelight Tours and 18th Century Market Fair, and provides financial support to Locust Grove as a member organization and donor.

And there's no question that the Jane Austen Festival exposes many people to Locust Grove. Many hundreds of fans attend the festival each year from many states and Canada — and this year from Bath, England, as well.

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