

Bucks County Historical Society
2015 ANNUAL REPORT



Photo by Allure West Studios



Photo by Allure West Studios



**MERCER
MUSEUM
& FONTHILL
CASTLE**

LEGO Castle Adventure is produced by The Children's Museum of Indianapolis in partnership with LEGO Systems Inc.



Mercer Museum & Library Photo: J. Totaro



Fonthill Castle Photo: Nic Barlow

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN & DIRECTOR

The year round learning and cultural engagement activities at the Mercer Museum and Library & Fonthill Castle provide unique opportunities to explore history — opportunities that would likely be inaccessible for many of our visitors. These exceptional offerings are what we strive to deliver everyday...to provide unforgettable experiences that connect the public with history and offer remarkable encounters to learn from and discover our past.

As the cover depicts, it was the year of Lego™ at the Mercer Museum. Through the museum's exciting changing exhibitions program, we presented four shows for the benefit of our communities; *Lego® Castle Adventure* was just one of these memorable experiences. The positive impact of this exhibition touched all areas of our organization and resulted in one of our most successful years for visitation across the Mercer Mile.

Our quality programs and services engage audiences of all ages. Schoolchildren visiting the castles took part in unique experiences such as “Log House Life,” “Write Like a Babylonian,” and tile making classes. More than 8,000 schoolchildren benefited from history-themed activities to enrich their exploration of the past. Serving as the regional coordinator of National History Day, we worked with more than 700 middle and high school students who took part in this highly competitive event. For our adult visitors, local walking tours, workshops and storytelling performances offered opportunities to rediscover history. Fonthill Castle's popular “Behind the Scenes” tours drew large crowds eager to explore Henry Mercer's home, and our annual Old Fashioned Fourth of July Celebration proved, once again, that community-centered events remain very popular.

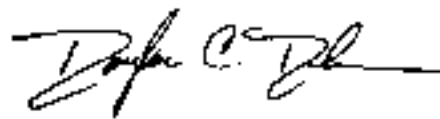
We continued our commitment to collaborations, working with the Bucks County Fire Chiefs' and Firefighters Association to present two free outdoor events showcasing antique and modern firefighting equipment. These were offered in conjunction with our Firefighting Exhibition, and more than 1600 total attendees enjoyed the festivities. In partnership with the Doylestown Bookshop, Fonthill staff experimented with offering a “Pop Up Museum” focused on Mercer's extensive library. Our staff in the Mercer Research Library added more than 4,000 additional images to RolloPAC, our online public access catalog. The team also accessioned and catalogued 325 new acquisitions into the museum and library collections.

As stewards of a remarkable collection, we are keenly aware that our role today is to preserve the past for future generations to explore, to learn from and to discover. We are also mindful that providing special connections to history requires the dedication and generosity of many friends and supporters. As you peruse this report and revisit our 2015 highlights, please know that we could not achieve all that we do without our members, volunteers, donors, supporters and interns. They make the difference...every day.

Thank you for sharing our commitment to history, and we hope to see you at one of our upcoming programs or events.



John R. Augenblick
Board Chairman



Douglas C. Dolan
President & Executive Director

MERCER MUSEUM AND LIBRARY

PROGRAMS AND EXHIBITIONS

The Mercer Museum regularly sponsors an array of programs for youth, adult and general audiences. These include both on- and off-site learning experiences for children, among them our popular LEGO™ Robotics and “Wild World of Wizarding” summer camps, the long-running Dolls’ Day Out, the Bucks-Mont Regional History Day competition for middle and high school students, and “Log House Life” for very young children. For adult and general audiences, the museum sponsors programs annually in conjunction with African-American History Month, Presidents’ Day, the Halloween season, and the December holidays, plus walking tours, workshops and storytelling performances.



Historic Foodways Interpreter
Susan Plaisted in Mercer Log House

In 2015 we continued our program of special exhibitions in the Martin & Warwick Foundation Galleries with two traveling shows, plus one derived from the museum’s own rich collection of historical firefighting material culture. Exhibits included *House and Home*; *‘To Save Our fellow Citizens:’ Volunteer Firefighting, 1800-1875*; and the extremely popular *LEGO® Castle Adventure*. In addition, we presented our annual seasonal display, *Under the Tree: A Century of Holiday Toys*. To accompany the exhibits, we produced and scheduled a number of special programs. These included, for example, two “Fire Muster” events on the museum grounds, featuring displays and demonstrations of antique and modern fire apparatus in conjunction with *To Save Our Fellow Citizens*. The House and Home exhibit was enhanced by a lecture series that included talks by local architects, designers and historians. And, a sold-out series of youth robotics workshops formed part of our *LEGO® Castle Adventure* programming.



Top: First Place Winner, Senior
Individual Exhibits, Bucks-Mont
Regional History Day 2015

Above: LEGO™ Robotics Youth
Workshop

The museum’s programming extends also into the original Mercer “castle,” where we continued to offer our “Expedition Backpacks” to visitors during the summer months, with activities to enrich children’s interaction with the collections. In addition, exhibit staff developed a prototype for an enhanced series of interactive stations related to our popular “Animals on the Loose” exhibit. Of course, the permanent Mercer galleries, with their eccentric and dense displays of tools and other artifacts, remain a major draw for museum audiences.

2015 Highlights:

- Nearly 6,200 school children, ranging from pre-school to high school, experienced Mercer Museum programs such as “Log House Life,” “Simple Machines,” “Frontier Trading,” and “Henry’s Harvest of Art.”
- More than 200 children participated in the Mercer Museum’s summer camps, including our long-running Robotics Camps and our expanded “Wild World of Wizarding” Camp.
- In conjunction with the *LEGO® Castle Adventure* exhibit, Mercer education staff hosted 37 LEGO-themed birthday parties, attended by more than 500 children.
- Over 700 middle and high school students participated in the Mercer Museum-sponsored regional History Day competition at Ursinus College.
- Exhibit staff launched a research and planning project for our anticipated 2018 show on the history of racing – foot, bicycle, horse and motor – in the Delaware Valley Region.
- In collaboration with area storytellers, the museum presented “Giving Voice to Mercer’s World,” an ensemble performance combining poetry, narrative and music in the Museum’s Central Court.

Family Enjoys Firefighting “Muster” Event on the Mercer Grounds



MERCER MUSEUM AND LIBRARY COLLECTIONS

The collections of the Mercer Museum and Library reflect and illustrate three broad aspects of our past: (1) Bucks County history and culture up to the present day, (2) the history of everyday life and work in pre industrial America, to circa 1850, and (3) the contributions and achievements of Henry Chapman Mercer, archaeologist, collector, architect, tile maker and museum founder.

The continued stewardship of the collections is a major responsibility of the Museum and Historical Society, and an important task for both curatorial and library staff. Stewardship involves the care and preservation of collections, as well as improving documentation and providing access to collections information for researchers and other users – both on- and off-site. In 2015, more than 720 researchers visited the Mercer Library, while nearly 500 received answers to queries by mail, telephone and e-mail.



Ongoing stewardship activities include maintenance of our historic structures, processing and cataloging collections, photographic documentation, housekeeping, inventory maintenance, and monitoring environmental conditions. Many new acquisitions to the collections are received annually, and must be

accessioned and entered into the institution's database. Researchers may gain access to information about a portion of the museum and library collections through our website, utilizing the "RolloPAC" on-line catalog portal. In 2015 staff added more than 4,000 additional images to RolloPAC, enhancing the catalog's value as a visual reference. Work also went forward on several special projects, including the re-housing and cataloging of the library's collection of bound manuscript materials, the ongoing re-installation of architectural tiles at Fonthill Castle, and an initiative to significantly expand capacity in the Historical Society's off-site storage and study center. A project to upgrade technology and enhance access to materials in the Mercer Research Library was also completed.

2015 Highlights:

- Accessioned and cataloged some 325 new acquisitions into the museum and library collections.
- Received a preservation grant of \$5,000 from the National Endowment for the Humanities to support re-housing of the library's collection of bound manuscripts.
- Acquired a new digital microfilm reader, computer workstations, and other technology enhancements for the library with funds provided by several private donors.
- Installed window film and roller shades to control light levels in the library, a project supported by the William Penn Foundation and the Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts in Philadelphia.
- Completed the move of three major museum collections (totaling approximately 1800 objects) into improved environmental conditions at our off-site Storage and Study Center. Funding for the project, which included the acquisition of new storage furniture, was provided by a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, a federal agency.
- Installed reproduction draperies in Fonthill Castle's Terrace Bedroom to control light and enhance the appearance of the historic interior, a project supported by funding from the Fonthill Questers.

Return from the Dress Parade, William B.T. Trego, c. 1885. Gift of Debra Anderson.



Top: Bristol Fire Co. No. 1 Helmet, Cairns and Brother, New York City, c. 1890. Gift of David B. Long, 2015

Above: Langhorne Speedway Souvenir Flag, Bucks County, c. 1960. Museum Purchase, 2015



Mercer Collections Move and Storage Improvement Project



FONTHILL CASTLE PROGRAMS

In 2015 Fonthill Castle continued its long tradition of sharing the story of Henry Mercer and his artist achievements through a wide variety of tours and programs with our many guests. In addition to the regular and school tours led through the castle, we offered Tower Tours for Families, Behind the Scenes Tours, Candlelight Tours and Mercer's Night Tales. Fonthill staff and volunteers presented a range of interactive youth programs including Write like a Babylonian, Aztec Headdress, a Medieval Sampler, and a tile making class.

Fonthill also presented a varied selection of non-tour programs for our general and adult guests. These programs and events included the Spring and Holiday Meanders, The Holiday Family Open House in conjunction with the Moravian Pottery and Tile Works, Stories by the Castle with Darcy Fair, photography workshops, a tile exhibit, and the Fonthill Beer Fest. Planning for these programs was facilitated by a new part-time Site Assistant position.

In partnership with Memorable Affairs, our exclusive caterer, Fonthill served as the location for over 20 rentals, many of which were weddings. The castle was the setting for two commercial fashion photo shoots and one musical album release. The rentals are particularly important as a means to diversify revenue.

Beyond our programs and events, vital preservation and restoration work was launched and/or completed. The Gatepost on North Street was restored with funds raised by Quester groups and others; this is the first of the gate posts to be completed. Also with local Quester group funds a historic reproduction of the curtain in the Terrace Room was installed. A Collections intern, following established methodology, worked to reattach tiles that had fallen off walls. This project is ongoing.



Fonthill's annual Old-Fashioned 4th of July is enjoyed by all ages.

2015 Highlights:

- Over 30,000 guests representing all 50 states and dozens of foreign countries participated in tours, programs and events at Fonthill Castle.
- Restoration of the North Street Gatepost following extensive fundraising and the support of multiple Quester groups.
- Over 2,000 people enjoyed Fonthill's annual Old-Fashioned July Fourth Celebration with a new offering of dog agility proving very popular.
- Collaboration with advanced photography students from both Central Bucks High School West and Central Bucks South using Fonthill as a learning laboratory. The students' work was displayed at Fonthill for all of our guests to experience.
- The presentation of the tile exhibit, "A Veneration for the Past" in partnership with four local tile makers. Tiles and other ceramic pieces were displayed along the main tour route of the castle.
- Experimentation with offering a "Pop Up Museum" with Doylestown Bookshop focusing on Mercer's extensive library and penchant for writing his personal comments on the author in book margins.



Above: Wedding guests enjoy the setting of Fonthill for the couple's special day.



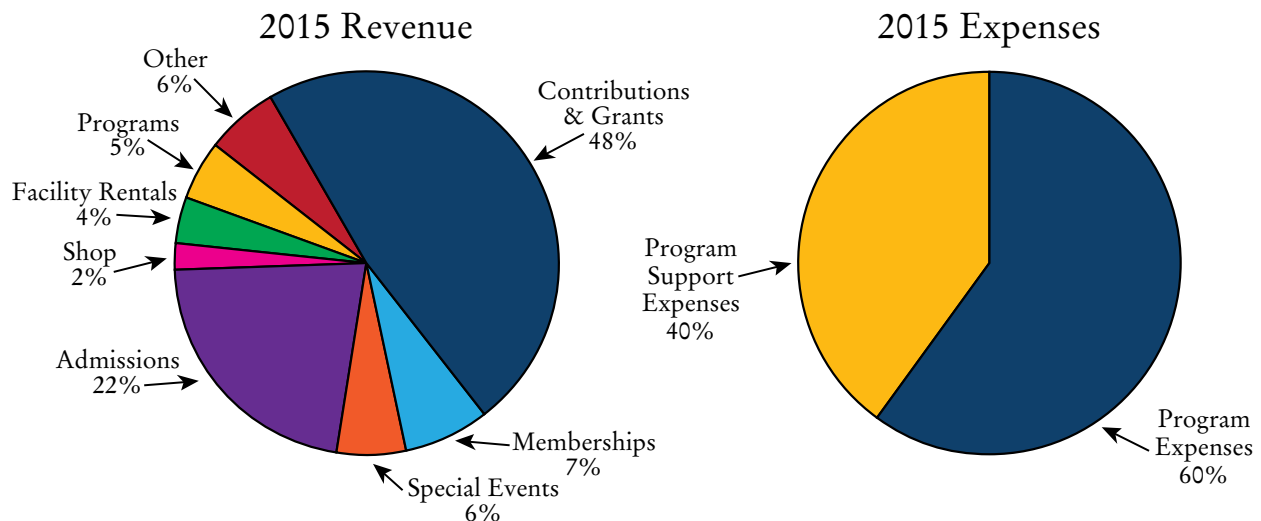
Left: Fonthill's Terrace Room reproduction drapes unveiled.

FINANCIAL REPORT

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

Statements of Activities: Years ended December 31, 2015 and 2014

	2015	2014
SUPPORT AND REVENUE:		
Grants and Contributions	\$781,850	\$603,033
Memberships	114,006	90,926
Special events		
Society Activities (Net of Direct Costs of 2015 \$66,654; 2014 \$72,350)	105,230	79,535
Museum operations:		
Admissions	360,764	247,680
Programs	84,745	71,059
Museum shop, net of expenses (2015 \$46,445; 2014 \$35,292)	31,859	32,789
Publications, Net of Expenses (2015 \$5,729; 2014 \$6,367)	1,058	124
Facilities rental	60,748	32,800
Miscellaneous income	8,838	6,144
Investment income:		
Trust fund income	13,686	14,539
Investment income	67,098	761,628
	1,629,882	1,940,257
EXPENSES:		
Program Services:		
Library	290,800	249,445
Curatorial	845,778	728,515
Educational	373,586	390,310
Support Services:		
Management and general	381,695	375,119
Development and fundraising	643,969	598,762
	2,535,828	2,342,151
Adjustment of Actuarial Liability for Annuities Payable	(3,102)	5,198
Change in net assets	(909,048)	(396,696)
Net assets, beginning of year	24,348,417	24,745,113
Net assets, end of year	\$23,439,369	\$24,348,417



GIVING

Thank you to the many individuals, businesses, foundations, public and private agencies and community organizations that so generously supported our valuable work in 2015. We simply would not have accomplished all that was achieved without these remarkable donors.

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Tom Thomas & Lynn Taylor*
Mrs. Ann B. Kleinsasser



Young performers entertain at Mercer Museum's Holiday Open House



Crowd gathers at Fonthill Castle Beer Fest

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 Dr. Alfonso & Mrs. Gay Tobia
 Dr. & Mrs. John W. Tomlinson
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 All who contributed for this wonderful
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 Mr. Chester Wurtz
 Donna Zebley, *In Honor of
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Dashboard Hula Girls film their music video for "Mr. Bluebird"



Members and sponsors attend House & Home exhibit preview event

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In Memory of James A. Wiley
Kurt & Margaret Garoutte,
*In Memory of David & Marian
Rockafellow (Library Fund)*
*In Memory of Richard Strauss,
from Richard's Library Co-workers
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Joyce & George Krauter,
In Memory of Roy Reinard, Sr.

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*Storyteller Charles Kiernan as Mark Twain at
Friends of BCHS quarterly meeting*



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Keg Level

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Muller Beverage



Kids enjoy interactive LEGO® catapult

Photo by Allure West Studios

Pint Level

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**Deceased*

We apologize for any misspellings or omissions.

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