

Bucks County Historical Society
2014 ANNUAL REPORT

Donors
Experiences
Exploration
Discovery
Preservation
Community
Future
Creativity
Innovative
Adventure
Generations
Stories
Engagement
Perspectives
History
Castles
Connections
Legacy
Excitement
Past
Audiences
Exhibitions
Education
Intriguing
Volunteers
Excellence
Inspiring
Collections
Meanings
Stewardship



MERCER
MUSEUM
& FONTHILL
CASTLE



Mercer Museum & Library Photo: J. Totaro

Castles



Fonthill Castle Photo: Nic Barlow

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN & DIRECTOR

There are many words that aptly express the value and significance the Mercer Museum and Fonthill Castle represent for our communities. These remarkable castles, operated by the Bucks County Historical Society, offer extraordinary opportunities for visitors of all ages to experience history and to connect with the past. As you peruse the following pages, you will note that many of the words featured on the cover are represented in the images and highlights included in this report.

Words like exploration, adventure and engagement embody the countless services and programs we provided in 2014. We continued our commitment to quality education services for more than 8,000 schoolchildren who visited the castles. Our National History Day program drew a record number of participants, with nearly 700 students taking part in this highly competitive process. Fonthill welcomed more than 2,000 schoolchildren who enjoyed discovering the treasures of Henry Mercer's legacy. Last year, the castles attracted a combined 100,000+ visitors who explored these National Historic Landmarks, and our online analytics tracked more than 155,000 unique visitors to our website.

Complementing our education programs and visitor services, the Mercer and Fonthill presented a total of six exhibitions as diverse as the circus, tiles and the seasons, Route 66 and Civil Rights. These exhibitions provided opportunities to learn about and to learn from the past, inspiring our visitors and igniting a newfound curiosity and passion for history.

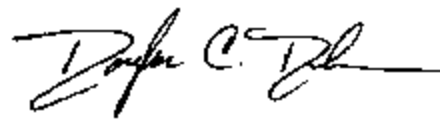
Our dedication to preservation and stewardship is the foundation of our work. Last year, we partnered with conservation professionals to begin the restoration of select artifacts for our major 2015 volunteer firefighting exhibition. We also worked with community groups to prepare for the restoration of the Fonthill gates initiative. We accessioned and cataloged approximately 250 new acquisitions into the museum and library collections, and our library staff provided research services and assistance to more than 1,200 users.

Perhaps the most significant word on this report cover is community. Our community of dedicated members, volunteers, donors, interns and supporters help us accomplish all that we do annually. We simply would not be able to achieve so much without the unwavering commitment of these extraordinary partners. We are truly grateful for all they do.

We hold true to our belief that *history matters*...and we are committed to ensuring that the generations of today and tomorrow recognize the irreplaceable role history plays in our cultural heritage and in our everyday lives.



William D. Maeglin
Board Chairman



Douglas C. Dolan
Executive Director

Excitement

Intriguing

Adventure

Engagement

MERCER MUSEUM AND LIBRARY PROGRAMS AND EXHIBITIONS

The Mercer Museum generates a wide variety of programs for school, camp, adult and general audiences. Providing both on- and off-site learning experiences for children in the Delaware Valley Region, our programs for schools and other youth audiences include our popular LEGO™ Robotics and “Wild World of Wizarding” camps, the long-running Dolls’ Day Out, and the Bucks-Mont Regional National History Day competition. The museum sponsors special programs for a variety of audiences during African-American History Month, Presidents’ Day, the Halloween season, and the December holidays, plus annual walking tours, genealogy workshops, craft activities, and storytelling programs. In 2014, we also produced and scheduled an array of programs related to our special exhibits, with various speakers, artists, performers and others enhancing shows related to the circus, games, history of Route 66, and Civil Rights Movement.



National History Day
contest participants

We continued our program of special exhibitions in the Martin & Warwick Foundation Galleries with four traveling shows, each augmented with materials from the museum’s own holdings or loans from area private collections. Exhibits included *Step Right Up! Behind the Scenes of the Circus Big Top, 1890-1965*; *Playing Together: Games; America’s Road: The Journey of Route 66*; and *For All the World to See: Visual Culture and the Struggle for Civil Rights*. In addition, we presented our annual seasonal display, *Under the Tree: A Century of Holiday Toys*. Some of the shows also featured special “in-gallery” programs. Circus aerialists performed feats of acrobatics in *Step Right Up!*, while our Expedition Cart – staffed by volunteers – provided family activities related to the circus, games, and holiday exhibits. The museum’s exhibit program extends also into the original

Mercer “castle,” where we developed new “Expedition Backpacks,” with activities to enrich children’s interaction with the collections. Of course, the permanent Mercer galleries, with their eccentric and dense displays of tools and other artifacts, remain a major draw for museum audiences.

2014 Highlights:

- More than 6,700 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.”
- With funding from the 2013 Cocktails at the Castle Mission Appeal, and other donors, new computers, learning kits, software and other materials were acquired to enhance and expand the Mercer’s long-running LEGO™ Robotics Summer Camps.
- A record number of students – nearly 700 – participated in the Mercer Museum-sponsored regional History Day competition at Ursinus College.
- Completed planning, object selection and design work for our major 2015 exhibit, *To Save Our Fellow Citizens: Volunteer Firefighting, 1800-1875*.
- Collaborated with the Philadelphia School of Circus Arts, the African-American Museum of Bucks County, and the Friendly Quilters to present programming and additional displays related to the *Step Right Up!* and *For All the World to See* exhibits.



Above: Second Baptist
Church of Doylestown choir



Left: Philadelphia School of
Circus Arts aerialist

MERCER MUSEUM AND LIBRARY COLLECTIONS

Appropriate to our mission, 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 both 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 2014, more than 700 researchers visited the Mercer Library, while more than 500 received answers to queries by mail, telephone and e-mail.

Ongoing stewardship activities include maintenance of our historic and other structures, processing and cataloging collections, photographic documentation, housekeeping, inventory maintenance, tracking object movement, 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, via the "RolloPAC" on-line catalog portal. More than 2700 new records and images were added to RolloPAC in 2014. Several special collections projects were also initiated in 2014, including an interior tile condition study and a preservation needs assessment at Fonthill Castle, and a collections move and disaster planning/risk assessment study at the Mercer Museum. We also began projects to upgrade technology and increase shelf capacity for archival storage in the Mercer library.

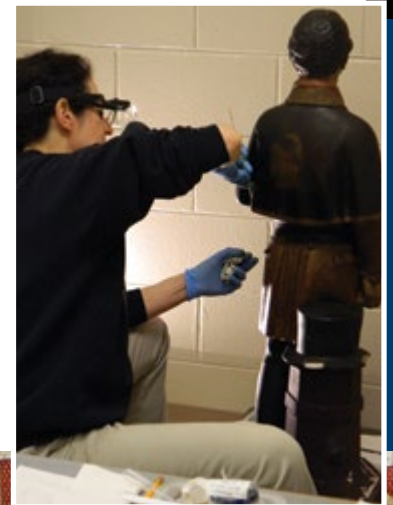
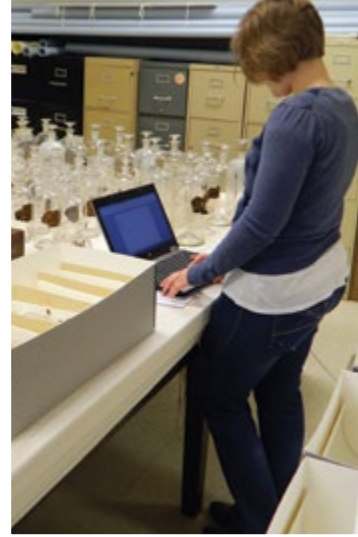
2014 Highlights:

- Accessioned and cataloged approximately 250 new acquisitions into the museum and library collections.
- Received a grant of \$74,236 from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, a federal agency, to relocate and re-house three important museum collections: medical instruments, African artifacts, and paintings. With the acquisition of new storage furniture, these collections will be moved to our off-site storage facility.
- Received a grant of \$5,100 from the Cynthia Woods Mitchell Fund, National Trust for Historic Preservation, to develop methodologies to secure and re-install Moravian Tiles that have loosened or become detached from their original installations at Fonthill Castle.
- Received \$45,000 from two foundations and individual donors to support the aforementioned Mercer library technology enhancements.
- Secured funding and initiated treatments to clean and conserve 25 firefighting artifacts in preparation for our 2015 exhibit, *To Save Our Fellow Citizens*.
- Loaned artifacts from the collections to exhibits at the National Constitution Center, and Rutgers University. Continued loan to the National Museum of American Jewish History.

Top: Museum staff record locations of artifacts moved to off-site storage facility as part of major federal grant project.

Middle: Conservator cleans and prepares an object for the 2015 firefighting exhibit, "To Save Our Fellow Citizens"

Right: Friendship Quilt (detail), Bucks County, c. 1850. Gift of Roy and Nancy Kolb, 2014



FONTHILL CASTLE PROGRAMS



In 2014, Fonthill Castle continued its long tradition of sharing the story of Henry Mercer and his intellectual and artist achievements through a wide variety of tours, programs and exhibits with our many guests. In addition to the regular and school tours lead 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 wide range of interactive youth programs including Animals in the Castle, Paint a Knightly Shield, Write like a Babylonian, Aztec Headdress, Towers and Trebuchets, Medieval Camp, Archaeology Camp, a fourth grade writing workshop and a tile mosaic class.



Top: Storytelling by Darcy Fair
Above: Animals in the Castle Program

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, a Celtic concert, and the Beer Fest.

In partnership with Memorable Affairs, our exclusive caterer, Fonthill served as the location for over 20 rentals, many of which were weddings. In an effort to showcase the site to a wider audience, the castle was the setting for three commercial fashion photo shoots for such diverse companies as Bergdorf-Goodman, Tom James Suits and Real Simple Magazine. We were also the site for two videos by musical groups Triptyq and Vesper Heights.

Beyond our programs and events, several preservation and restoration projects were launched and/or completed throughout 2014. With the valued participation of an intern and volunteer, the books that had been originally kept in the Wind Room were inventoried and re-housed. Questers from around the state raised valuable funds for the restoration of the concrete gate post on North Street, and through the generosity of local Quester groups, production began of the reproduction curtains that will hang in the Terrace Room. In addition to helping create a more accurate look to the room, these curtains will also help us control the light levels.

2014 Highlights:

- Over 28,000 guests participated in tours, programs and events at Fonthill Castle
- The presentation of the tile exhibit, "For Every Season, Tile, Tile, Tile: Tiles Inspired by Henry Mercer and the Seasons" in partnership with four local tile makers. Tiles and other ceramic pieces were displayed along the main tour route of the castle in an effort to further explore one of Henry Mercer's favorite themes; the seasons.
- Fonthill partnered with Glencairn Museum and the Doylestown Bookshop to expand programming opportunities and audiences.
- Collaboration with advanced photography students from Central Bucks High School West to use Fonthill as a learning laboratory. The students' final works were displayed at Fonthill for all of our guests to experience.
- Due to rain, Fonthill had to scale back its Old-Fashioned July Fourth Celebration for the first time in over twenty years. But we still had over 400 people visit the museum!



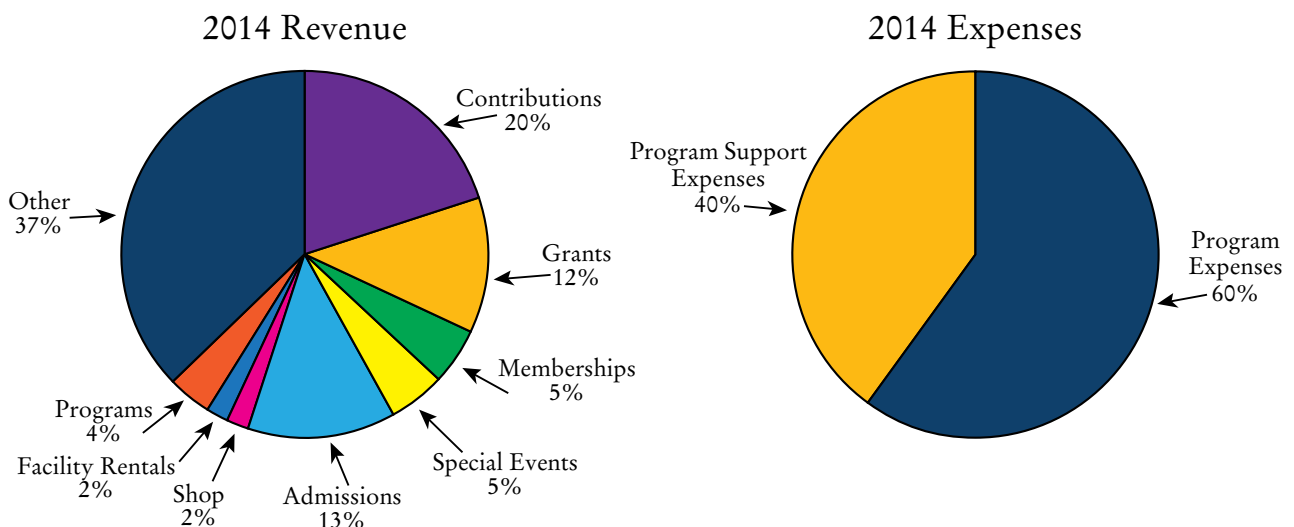
Left: Inspired by Henry Mercer's interest in Medieval art and history, Medieval camp's young squires and ladies explored, crafted, quested and achieved the rank of knight.

FINANCIAL REPORT

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

Statements of Activities: Years ended December 31, 2014 and 2013

	2014	2013
Support and Revenue:		
Contributions	\$370,928	\$1,236,191
Grants	228,692	103,149
Memberships	90,926	94,634
Special events		
Society Activities (Net of Direct Costs of 2014 \$72,350; 2013 \$78,152)	79,535	90,190
Museum operations:		
Admissions	247,680	250,470
Programs	71,059	72,289
Museum shop, net of expenses	32,789	15,533
Publications	124	3,784
Facilities rental	32,800	19,535
Miscellaneous income	6,144	22,691
Investment income:		
Trust fund income	14,539	16,656
Investment income	761,628	1,718,560
	1,936,844	3,643,682
Expenses:		
Program Services:		
Library	249,445	215,590
Curatorial	728,515	769,869
Educational	390,310	332,111
Support Services:		
Management and general	375,119	586,979
Development and fundraising	598,762	518,960
	2,342,151	2,423,509
Adjustment of Actuarial Liability for Annuities Payable	8,611	9,356
Change in net assets	(396,696)	1,229,529
Net assets, beginning of year	24,745,113	23,515,584
Net assets, end of year	\$24,348,417	\$24,745,113



GIVING

Thank you to the many individuals, businesses, foundations, public and private agencies and community organizations that so generously supported our valuable work in 2014. We simply would not have accomplished all that was achieved without these remarkable donors.

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**Deceased*

We apologize for any misspellings or omissions.

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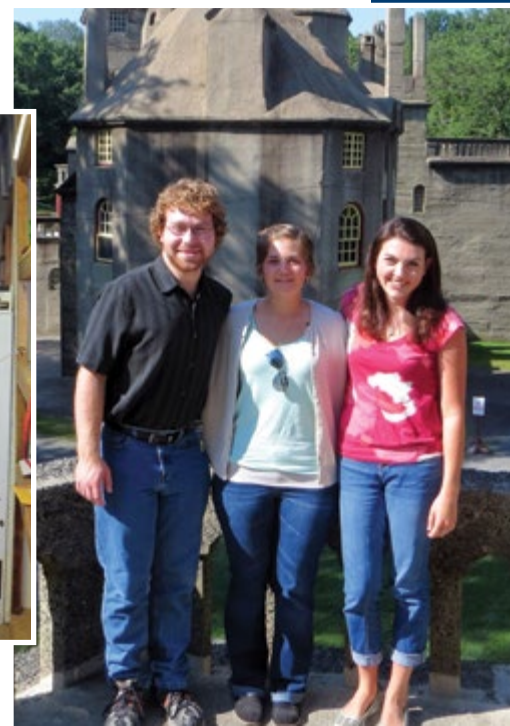
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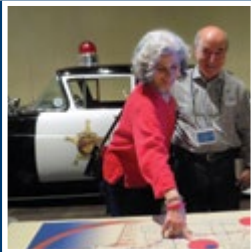
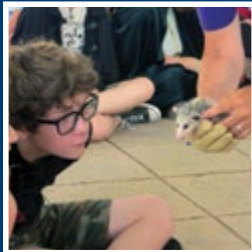
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Left to right: Day of Service provided by Keller Williams Real Estate employees; John Lear conducting genealogical research in the Mercer Library; Kirk Fredendall, Fredendall Building Company, completes repairs on Log Cabin. Project funded in part by the Rotary Club of Doylestown.



It is the mission of the Bucks County Historical Society to educate and engage its many audiences in appreciating the past and to help people find stories and meanings relevant to their lives – both today and in the future.

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