

A Mercer Resume

Read through the timeline and other sources about Henry Mercer below. To get a sense of Mercer's background and personality, **write a resume for Henry**, including his education, jobs or work accomplished, his hobbies and talents, his accolades and his goals in life, using the sources provided. Discuss your impressions as a class.

1856 Born in Doylestown, PA.

1870 First trip to Europe.

1875-1879 Attends Harvard University
and attains a liberal arts degree.

1880 Becomes founding member of the
Bucks County Historical Society.

1880-1 Attends University of Pennsylvania
Law School.

1881-9 Travels extensively in Germany and France, writes many letters and published articles.

1891 Becomes curator at the University of Pennsylvania's Museum of Science and Art. Begins to travel up and down east coast searching for archaeological evidence of humans in North American before the Ice Age. Excavates cave sites in Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula.

1897 Leaves the field of archaeology, feeling his investigations had been failures. Begins collecting old tools as a way of studying American history and industry. Exhibits his new collection in Bucks County and publishes *The Tools of the Nation Maker*. Begins producing clay tiles from a factory on his family's property.

Early 1900s Mercer's Moravian Pottery & Tile Works turns profitable. Exhibits his tiles in Europe, Pennsylvania and New York. Elected as a member of the Society



Henry Mercer with his favorite Chesapeake Bay Retriever, Rollo, ca. 1910.

A Mercer Resume

- of Arts & Crafts in Boston. Commissioned to create floor tiles at the Capitol building in Harrisburg with images from Pennsylvania history in 1903.
- 1904* Receives grand prize for his tiles at Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis.
- 1908* Inherits a fortune from his aunt Elizabeth and begins building what would be his dream house, Fonthill. He wants the house to illustrate his “literary and artistic dreams and memories of travel.”
- 1911* Builds a larger Pottery & Tile Works near the site of Fonthill.
- 1912* Final phases of building Fonthill completed and Mercer moves in permanently.
- 1913-1916* Builds the Mercer Museum to house his tools and other collections. Society of Arts & Crafts awards Henry its highest honor, a bronze medal, for his work as a potter.
- 1916* Receives honorary Doctor of Science degree from Franklin and Marshall College in Lancaster, PA. As World War I rages on in Europe, Mercer writes letters to various newspapers and friends asserting that Russia was more the aggressor than Germany and arguing against the United States going to war.
- 1921* Organizes and funds an expedition to China to study Chinese tools and technology. Awarded gold medal from American Institute of Architects for his achievements in ceramic art.
- 1928* Publishes *November Night Tales*, a collection of suspense stories.
- 1929* Publishes the landmark book *Ancient Carpenter’s Tools*. Awarded honorary Doctor of Laws degree from Lehigh University.
- 1930* Dies at Fonthill.

More information can be found in Linda Dyke’s “Henry Chapman Mercer: An Annotated Chronology” in Mercer Mosaic. Volume 6, Number 2-3 (1989).

A Mercer Resume

Excerpts from Henry Mercer's daybook:

July 8, 1928

"Since last note broke off negotiations for publishing *November Night Tales* with Dr. Dow & Stratford Co...I made a satisfactory bargain with Walter Neale of NY to pay him \$1500: \$500 preliminary, \$500 on receipt of proofs and \$500 on completion, with other reasonable items. By July 8, he had MS [manuscript] and everything underway.

"Continued work on Hommel's notes [concerning Chinese technology]. Finished Mr. Forman's tiles. Frank told me that last month, June, brought \$5000 profit to the Pottery in spite of business depression...Steps to Pavilion nearly finished. Work went slowly. It was complex & difficult. July 4 visit from Clarence Moore & Capt. Bispham as usual."

May 8, 1929

"Bible tiles for Reformed Lutheran Church in Doylestown total abt. 200 sq. feet, 100 on either side of the altar—made, presented to the church and very well set. A decided success. Much satisfaction. Work of managing Fonthill Arboretum by the Doylestown Nature Club systematized (by me)...Made a day book with all trees planted last fall and this spring; entered & each numbered therein & on chart to match.

"...Invented form for casting 5 ½ feet long thin cement posts, for labels for very small trees...worked well—9 cast very successfully & 5 more poured today—one planted and labeled in red—very handsome.

"Invited to exhibit Tiles & Mosaics in one of Wanamaker's Chestnut St. windows for an art association meeting in Phila on the 22. Accepted..."

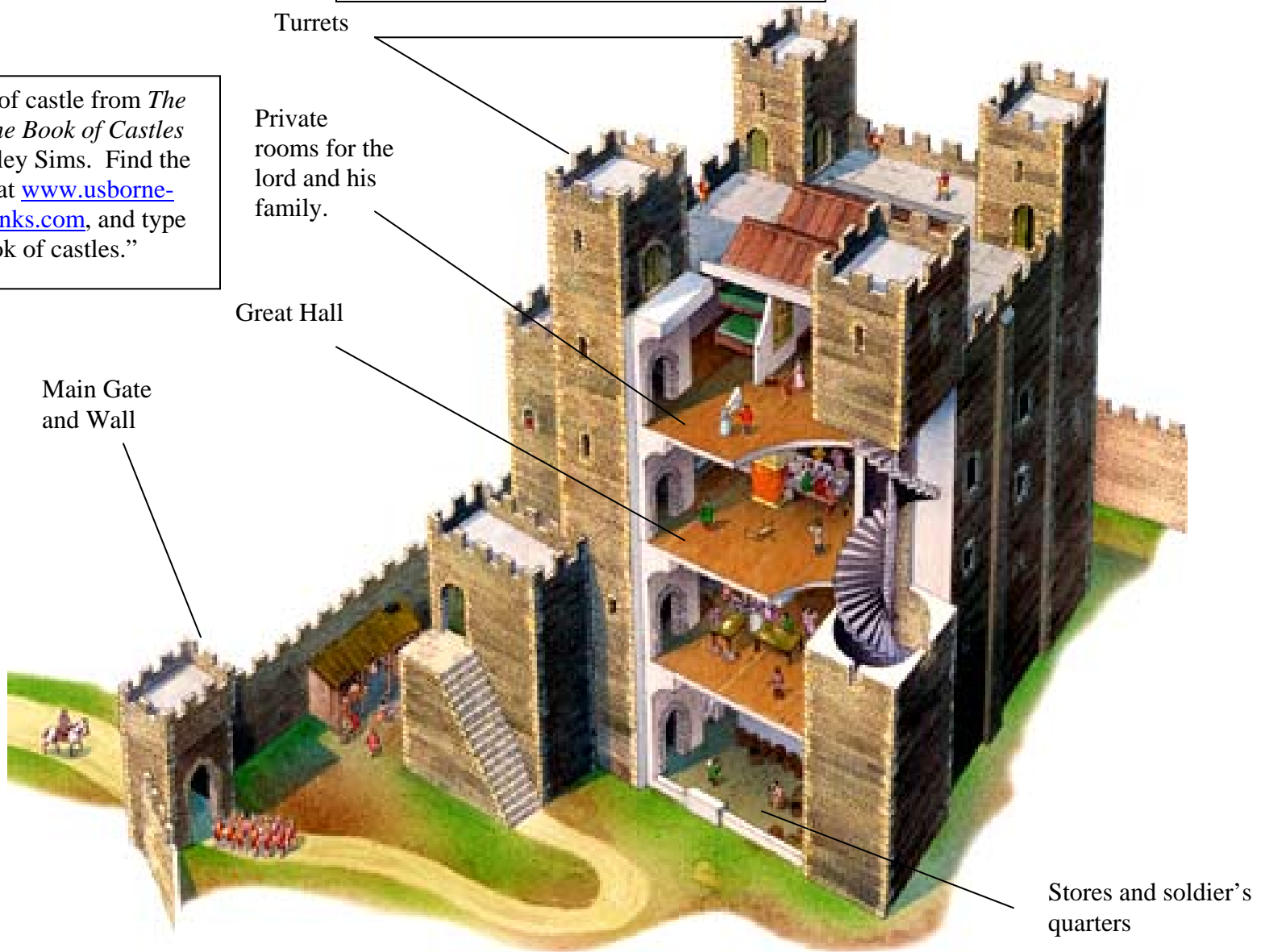
Comparing Castles

Henry Mercer had long had an interest in medieval history and culture by the time he built Fonthill, and his new home was inspired by European castles and manor houses. In this activity you will research the history of feudalism and apply it to the way that castles were built and the purposes they served. Compare the style and function of castles to the style and purposes of Fonthill using the illustrations provided and what you learn from your research. Here are some steps to help guide you:

- 1) Research feudal society in your school or local library, and note three things that characterize the period. What was going on at the time? Who was in charge and who was not? How did people live then?
- 2) Using what you know about feudalism, examine the castle on the second page. How were castles a “sign of the times”—that is, how do they show the feudal culture in which they were built? How do the building materials used to make castles determine the way it looks? You may want to reference specific features of a castle to make your point, such as turrets, gates, small windows and the great hall.
- 3) Compare the castle pictured here to Fonthill pictured on page three. Name two ways that Fonthill looks similar to a medieval castle. Name two features that are different from a medieval castle. What do you think the style of Fonthill says about its creator, Henry Mercer?

Comparing Castles

Image of castle from *The Usborne Book of Castles* by Lesley Sims. Find the image at www.usborne-quicklinks.com, and type in “book of castles.”

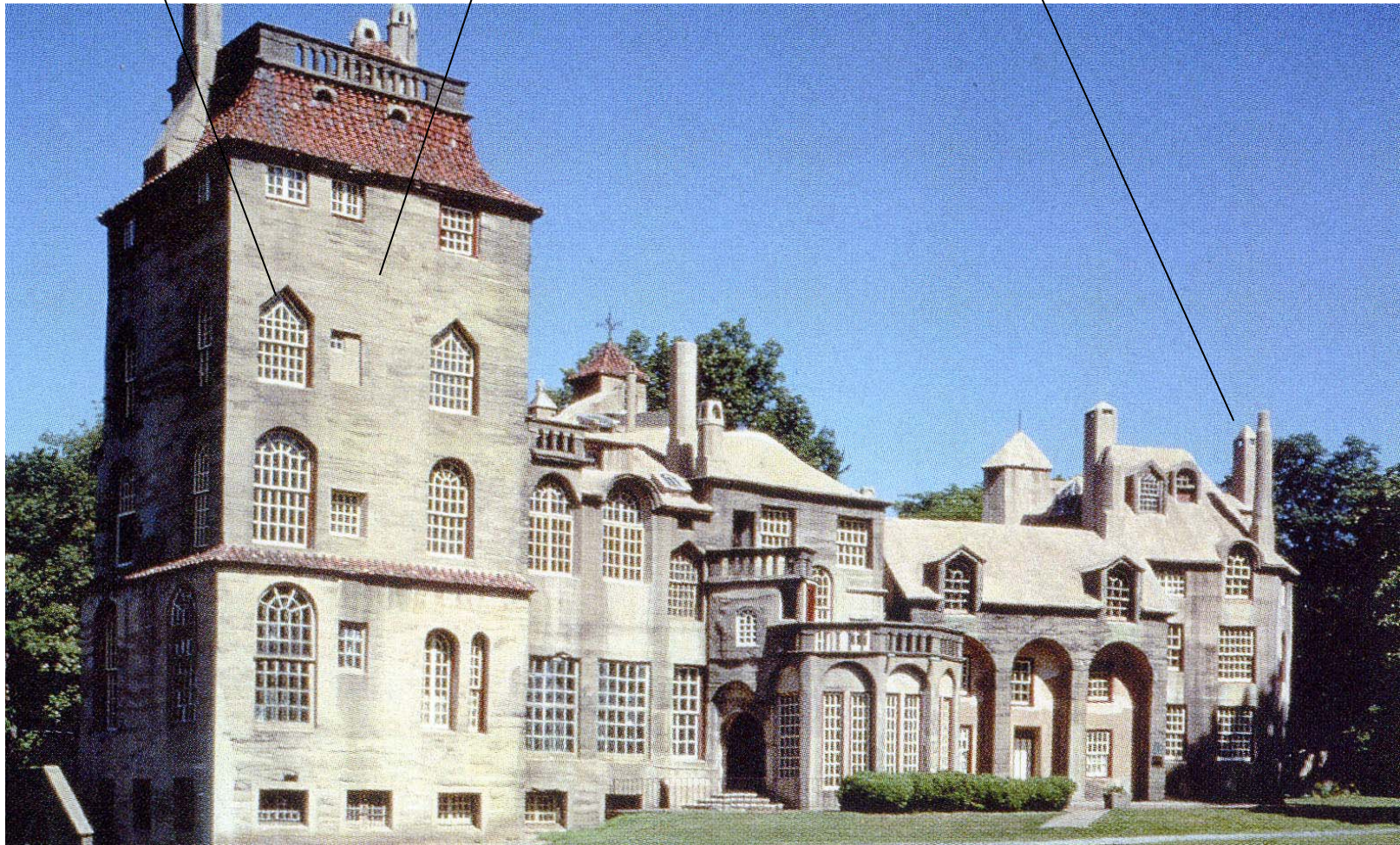


Comparing Castles

Large windows.

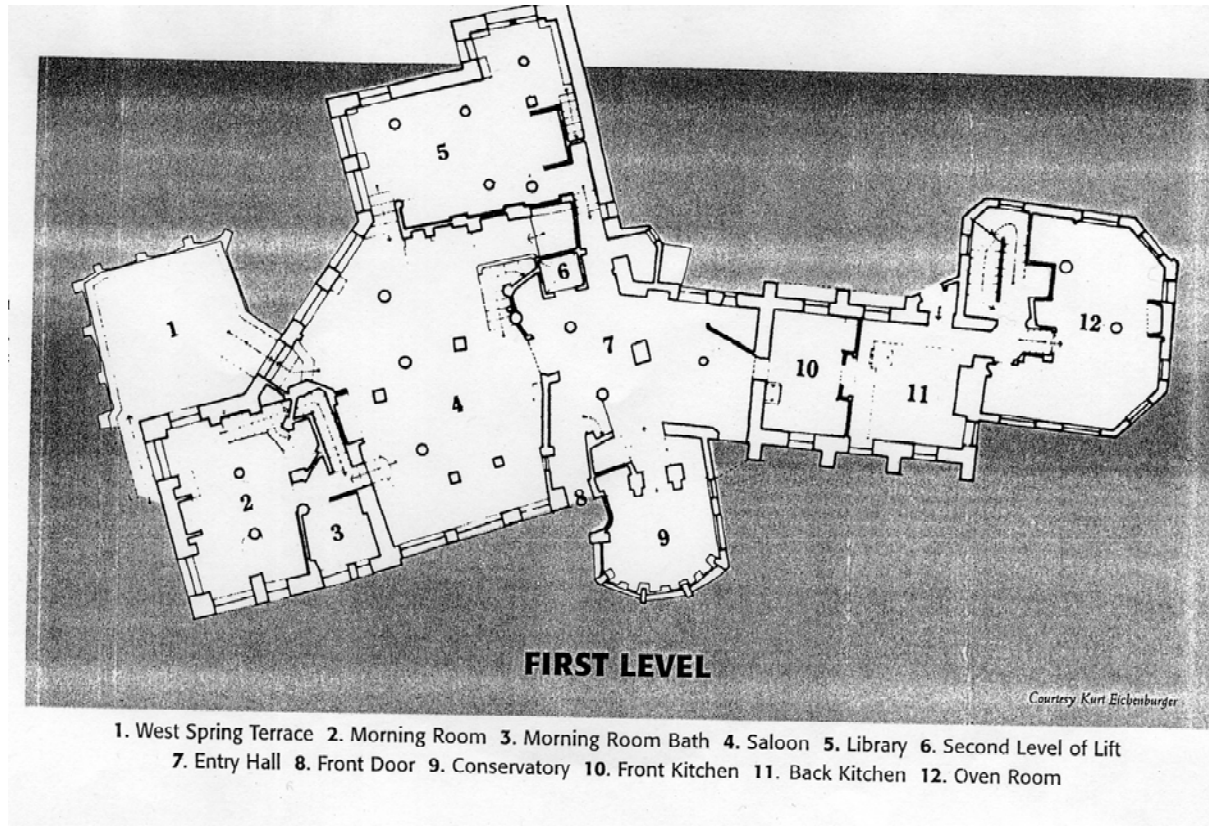
Tower: includes
several studies and
reading rooms.

21 chimneys
outside and 18
fireplaces inside.



Interior spaces include a library, study, guest bedrooms, modern bathrooms, and a kitchen.

Dream House



Fonthill was Henry Mercer's dream house—he was making plans and sketches of just this kind of building since his youth.

1) Practice your map-making and drafting skills by making a floor plan or map of your classroom or school as if you were looking at it from above. Use the floor plan of Fonthill on the left for reference. Start by making a key that contains symbols for important features such as windows, interior and exterior walls, and furniture.

2) Now design a floor plan of your own dream house on graph paper, one floor at a time. How many floors will it have? What shape will it be? How many rooms will it have? Include a key and use many of the same symbols you used for the first activity, or be creative and invent your own. Use the sample key on page two for reference.

Dream House



Exterior wall with two windows.



Staircase.



lamp



tables with different shapes



armchair



tables with chairs



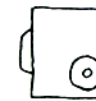
couch



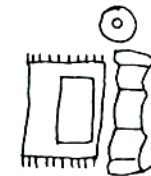
bed



rug



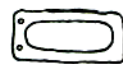
a desk, chair
and table lamp



a table on a rug
with a couch and
floor lamp



toilet



tub



sink



stove



refrigerator

Key from *Architecture in Education* by the Foundation for Architecture (Philadelphia, 1986): p. 107.

Keeping the Books at Fonthill

It cost exactly \$32,482 to build Fonthill in the early 1900s. Henry Mercer kept detailed records of his costs in a ledger for Fonthill's construction. Use the images provided below of Mercer's August 1908 expenses to answer questions about monthly expenses and costs of materials. Work in small groups or individually and share your solutions. (Each picture from the ledger is followed by a transcription—Henry's handwriting can be a little difficult to make out at times).

Questions:

- In general, what were Mercer's biggest expenses in building Fonthill?
- Find lists of names of Henry's workers and how much they earned in wages. How much did Patrick Trainor, the supervisor of Mercer's construction crew earn per day? How much for the whole month? What unusual worker earned wages according to the account book? Which worker was paid a higher rate and what was his task? What does that tell you about Mercer as an employer? Use the payroll figures to work out how much Mercer paid in wages for the entire month.
- How many railroad cars of various raw materials did Mercer ship to construct Fonthill during the month of August? Look for carloads of crushed stone, sand and cement. Who provided these materials? How much did Mercer pay for stone, sand and cement, plus shipping for these materials, for the month?
- What miscellaneous expenses did Mercer pay in August, and how much did they add up to? Look for things such as pipes, rods, boxes, scrap iron and other odds and ends.

Images of Henry Mercer's Fonthill Construction Accounts Ledger, 1908-1913, from the Spruance Library of the Bucks County Historical Society. Manuscript Collection 291, Series 7:57.

Aug 3.	Phil & Reading Co pr		
	1 Car Sand	13 75	13 75
"	Gen Crushed Stone Co		
	57 tons Stone 60¢	34.20	34 20
Aug 1-	Patrick Drains Drine Roll		
	John C. Drains 5 3/4 day	10.06	
	Adolph Bryan 5 3/4 "	10.06	
	Scott Case 2 3/4 "	4.81	
	Chas Ireland 4 3/4 "	8.31	
	Valentine Truck 5 "	7.50	
	Louis Tomach 5 3/4 "	8.63	
	Harry Gordon "	8.63	
	Horse & Cart 3 "	4.50	
	Patrick C. Drains 6 "	12.00	
	J. H. Moore 150 lbs Stone		
	Pipe 10¢	1.50	75.80
Aug.	Patrick Drains Drine Roll		
	John C. Drains - 6 days \$1.75	\$10.50	
	Adolph Bryan 6 "	10.50	
	Chas Ireland 6 "	10.50	
	Valentine Truck 6 "	9.00	
	Louis Tomach 6 "	9.00	
	Harry Gordon 6 "	9.00	
	Scott Case 1 "	1.50	
	Horse & Cart 3 "	4.50	
	P. C. Drains 6 " 200	12.00	
	Sett Grd 3 days hauling		
	sand @ 3.50	10.50	
	Telephone messages	1.20	88.20
			211.95
	Forward P. 28	3461.03	
		3672.98	

Fonthill Museum
A Concrete House

Keeping the Books at Fonthill

Post-Visit Materials

Aug 3	Phila & Reading Co. for		
	1 car sand	13.75	13.75
“	General Crushed Stone Co.		
	57 Tons crushed Stone 60 c.	34.20	34.20
Aug 6	Patrick Trainor Time Roll		
	John C. Trainor 5 ¾ days	10.06	
	Adolph Bregan 5 ¾ “ “	10.06	
	Scott Case 2 ¾ “	4.81	
	Chas Eveland 4 ¾ “	8.31	
	Valentine Prock 5 “	7.50	
	Louis Fonash 5 ¾ “	8.63	
	Harry Gordon “	8.63	
	Horse & Cart 3 “ “	4.50	
	P. B. Trainor 6 “	12.00	
	J. H. Moore 15 pc. Stove		
	Pipe 10 c.	<u>1.50</u>	75.80
Aug 8	Patrick Trainor Time Roll		
	John C. Trainor 6 days \$1.75	\$10.50	
	Adolph Bregan 6 “ “	10.50	
	Chas Eveland 6 “	10.50	
	Valentine Prock 6 “ 1.50	9.00	
	Louis Fonash 6 “ “	9.00	
	Harry Gordon 6 “ “	9.00	
	Scott Case 1 “ “	1.50	
	Horse & Cart 3 “ “	4.50	
	P. B. Trainor 6 “	12.00	
	Seth Good 3 days hauling		
	Sand @ 3.50	10.50	
	Telephone message	<u>1.20</u>	88.20
			211.95
	Forward p. 28		<u>3461.03</u>
			\$3672.98

Fonthill Museum
A Concrete House

Keeping the Books at Fonthill

Post-Visit Materials

Aug 15-08 Patrick Drain Line Roll

John C. Drain	6 day	1.75	\$10.50
Adolph Breaux	5 1/2 "	"	9.63
Chas Ireland	5 1/2 "	"	9.63
Valentine Brock	5 1/2 "	1.50	8.25
Louis Farnach	5 1/2 "	"	8.25
Harry Endon	" "	"	8.25
Leftt Case	" "	"	8.25
Horse & Cart	3 "	"	4.50
P. J. Drain	6 "	20	12.00
John Grunelly	Pipe		75
Frank Boulton	Shovel		60
3 cans			
Tim H. Lang	8 Box	05	40
Car fare & expenses to			
Phillips	Pipe		2.00
Robt W. Cunliffe	210 lbs		
Pipe @ 61		21.80	\$104.81

Aug 16-08 The Defrain Sand Co 12.93
 " " " " 11.69 24.62

" The Roeburn Construction Co
 2 Rolls 2 1/2" Velsch \$20 @ 5 R/H
 Painter's bath 300 ft by 37" =
 102 7/8 yds @ 21¢ 21.58

" Pitt & Co- Light profit.
 60 Bundles Pipe 9240 lbs @ 21¢ \$92.40

" James Bennett.
 Fence wire 3 kind
 Hoe - Brush Sprinkler
 Paint Screws - Shovel
 Sand Screen etc 32.28

29 7.29 3672.98

Fonthill Museum
A Concrete House

Keeping the Books at Fonthill

Post-Visit Materials

Aug 15, '08	Patrick Trainor Time Roll	
	John C. Trainor 6 days 1.75	\$10.50
	Adolph Bregan 5 ½ “ “	9.63
	Chas. Eveland 5 ½ “ “	9.63
	Valentine Prock 5 ½ “ 1.50	8.25
	Louis Fonash 5 ½ “ “	8.25
	Harry Gordon 5 ½ “ “ “	8.25
	Scott Case “ “ “	8.25
	Horse & Cart 3 “ “	4.50
	P. B. Trainor 6 “ 2.00	12.00
	John Donnelly Pipe	.75
	Frank Poulton Shelving	.60
	3 saws	
	Wm. H. Traux 8 boxes .05	.40
	Car Fare & Expenses to	
	Phila for Pipe	2.00
	Robert Cunliffe 2180 lbs.	
	Pipe @ .01	21.80 \$104.81
Aug 18- 08	The Defrain Sand Co.	12.93
	“ “ “ “	11.69 24.62
“	The Roebling Construction Co.	
	2 Rolls 2 ½” Mesh # 20 #5 Rod	
	Painter lath 300’ ft. by 37”=	
	102 7/9 yds. @ 21 c.	21.58
“	Plitt & Co.--	
	60 Bundles Pipe 9240 lbs. @ 1c	\$92.40
“	James Barrett	
	Fence wire 3 kinds	
	Hoe—Brush sprinkler	
	Paint screws---Shovels	
	Sand screw etc.	32.28
		275.69
	p. 29 foreward	3672.98

**Fonthill Museum
A Concrete House**

Keeping the Books at Fonthill

Post-Visit Materials

Fonthill Museum
A Concrete House

Keeping the Books
at Fonthill

Post-Visit Materials

Aug 22.	Patrick B. Drainer - Drive Roll		
	John C. Drainer 1 1/4 days 175	\$ 2.19	
	Adolph Bryan 5 3/4 " 1.75	10.07	
	Chas Ireland 5 " 1.75	8.75	
	Valentine Truck 5 1/2 " 1.50	8.25	
	Louis Truach 5 3/4 " 1.50	8.62	
	Harry Endon 5 1/2 " 1.50	8.25	
	Scott Case 5 1/2 " 1.50	8.25	
	Patrick B. Drainer 6 " 2.00	12.00	
	Horse & Cart 3 " 1.50	4.50	
	Henry D. Fry 13 Box	.50	
	A.R. Alkire " "	.75	\$ 72.13
"	Henry Frank - Hauling Cinders 6 1/2 days & Hauling poles		23.50
Aug 29 -	Patrick B. Drainer Drive Roll		
	Adolph Bryan 4 6/10 1.75	8.31	
	Valentine Truck " 1.50	6.90	
	Louis Truach " " 1.50	6.90	
	Scott Case 3 1/10 " 1.50	5.40	
	Chas Ireland 1 day	1.75	
	Horse & Cart 1 " 1.50		
	P.B. Drainer 6 " 2.00	12.00	42.76
"	F. Sholler for P & R. R. Freight		
	1 Car Stone	17.01	
	Scrap Iron	1.96	
	528 Bp Cement 1 car	37.62	
	Scrap Iron	8.32	
	1 Car Stone	15.72	80.63
			219.02
	Page 30 Forward	3948.67	
		4,167.69	

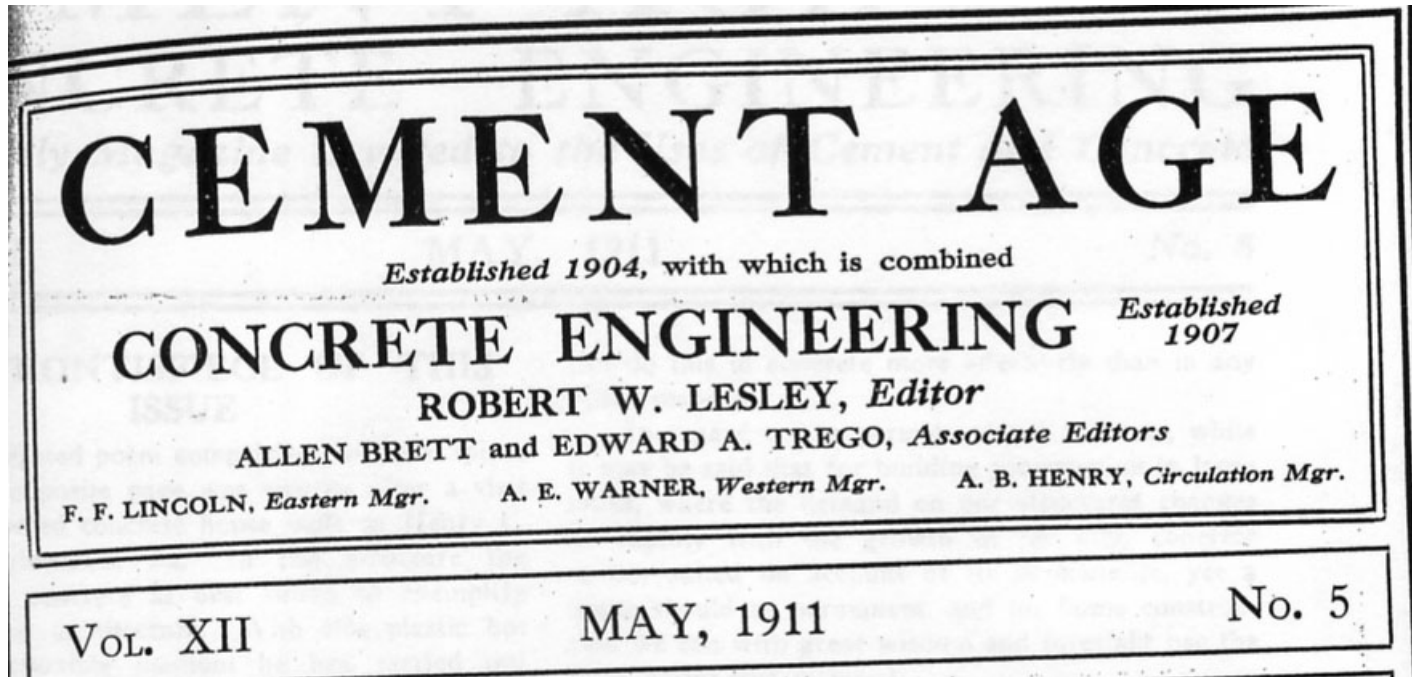
Aug 22	Patrick B. Trainor Time Roll	
	John C. Trainor 1 ¼ days 1.75	\$2.19
	Adolph Bregan 5 ¾ “ 1.75	10.07
	Chas. Eveland 5 “ 1.75	8.75
	Valentine Prock 5 ½ “ 1.50	8.25
	Louis Fonash 5 ¾ “ 1.50	8.62
	Harry Gordon 5 ½ “ 1.50	8.25
	Scott Case 5 ½ “ 1.50	8.25
	Patrick B. Trainor 6 “ 2.00	12.00
	Horse & Cart 3 “ 1.50	4.50
	Henry L. Fox 13 Boxes	.50
	A. R. Atkinson “	.75 \$72.13
“	Henry Funk hauling	
	Cinders 6 ½ days &	
	Hauling poles	\$23.50
Aug 29	Patrick B. Trainor Time Roll	
	Adolph Bregan 4 6/10 days “ 1.75	8.31
	Valentine Prock “ 1.50	6.90
	Louis Fonash “ “	6.90
	Scott Case 3 6/10 “	5.40
	Chas. Eveland 1 day	1.75
	Horse & Cart 3 1 “ 1.50	1.50
	P. B. Trainor 6 “ 2.00	<u>12.00</u> \$42.76
“	F. Sholler for P. & R.R.w. Freight	
	1 car stone	17.01
	Scrap iron	1.96
	528 lbs. cement 1 car	37.62
	Scrap iron	8.32
	1 car stone	<u>15.72</u> 80.63
		219.02
	p. 30 foreward	<u>3948.67</u>
		4,167.69

Fonthill Museum
A Concrete House

Keeping the Books at Fonthill

Post-Visit Materials

The Concrete Beat



Building with concrete wasn't an entirely new idea when Henry Mercer constructed Fonthill. Nevertheless, Mercer was one of the first Americans to create a concrete *house*. As a reporter for the magazine *Cement Age* it's your job to write a review of Mercer's creation and to make a case for building with concrete. Based on your tour of Fonthill and other activities, write an article that outlines how Mercer took advantage of the properties of concrete and that aims to persuade others to try building their own concrete houses.

Comparing Castles

- 1) Research feudal society in your school or local library, and note three things that characterize the period:
 - a. Internal warring between rival lords.
 - b. System of patronage where vassals pledged military service to lords who gave them land in return.
 - c. Peasants worked the lords' lands in exchange for protection.
- 2) Using what you know about feudalism, examine the castle on the second page. How were castles a "sign of the times"—that is, how do they show the feudal culture in which they were built? How do the building materials used to make castles determine the way it looks? You may want to reference specific features of a castle to make your point, such as turrets, gates, small windows and the great hall.
 - a. Castles were built for defense. The turrets, thick stone walls, and gates all show how a castle was built to withstand attack.
 - b. Castles show the class structure during feudal times, with the personal spaces for the lord at the top of the building, common spaces in the middle, and spaces for storage and lower ranking people at the bottom.
 - c. Castles also are built to store large amounts of goods to withstand a siege, to protect from harm, and to enrich the lord.
 - d. Most castles were built of cut stone blocks, and they were initially very square structures. Later castles were built with rounded turrets and other parts.
- 3) Compare the castle pictured here to Fonthill pictured on page three. Name two ways that Fonthill looks similar to a medieval castle. Name two features that are different from a medieval castle. What do you think the style of Fonthill says about its creator, Henry Mercer?
 - a. Similarities:
 - i. Fonthill's concrete makes it look as massive and sturdy as the stone of a medieval castle.
 - ii. Like many castles, Fonthill also sits on a hill, albeit a small one. Castles were usually built on hills because it would be easier to see attackers and defend against them.
 - iii. Like a castle, Fonthill was built almost entirely by hand.
 - iv. Fonthill's tower (on the left) mimics a castle's turret. It even has a terrace on the roof to stand on and observe the surroundings.
 - b. Differences:
 - i. Because Mercer used poured concrete to make the building, it is not as square as a castle. The shapes of some parts of the roof and walls are more smooth and curving as a result of using concrete.
 - ii. Fonthill has more decorative features than a typical castle. You can see the reddish roof tiles on the tower, and the asymmetrical chimneys and windows give the building a lot of variety.

- iii. Because castles had to defend against arrows, their windows were small and high up. That also means they could be very dark inside. Mercer built Fonthill with lots of windows to allow natural light into his building.
- c. For a gentleman scholar like Henry Mercer, Fonthill would have to prove intellectually sufficient for his needs. That is, so many of the rooms were libraries, studies, reading rooms, places where Mercer could read, write and think. There were also guest bedrooms, which shows Mercer's love of entertaining and hosting. His modern bathrooms and kitchen, as well as use of a modern material like concrete show the way he enjoyed blending history with modern life to create something entirely new and unique.

Keeping the Books at Fonthill

- 1) In general, Mercer's biggest expenses were in wages and heavy materials like cement and piping. His workers were one of his greatest expenses because Fonthill was a hand-made construction and the workmen were essential to creating Mercer's masterpiece. No machines were used to build the structure except for a cement mixer that Mercer made use of towards the end of construction.
- 2) Patrick B. Trainor (sometimes written as P.B. Trainor) earned \$2 a day, and for the whole month of August he earned \$60. The unusual worker on the payroll is noted as "horse & cart." The draft horse, Lucy, is actually recorded as having earned wages, \$1.50/day, as much as Mercer's other workers. Lucy belonged to Patrick Trainor. One worker, Seth Good is recorded as getting \$3.50/day to haul sand, which may have been a particularly arduous task in August. As an employer, Mercer may have been trying to compensate him fairly. (It could be noted that he was not always so generous with his female workers, especially his housekeeper, Laura Swain, who was his most devoted servant yet had plead for a raise after years of service). Including Lucy, Henry Mercer paid \$378.45 in wages for August 1908. The easiest way to arrive at this is to find the payroll list on each page and look at the right-hand-most column for the total wages. Then subtract miscellaneous items that Mercer also recorded for the same day, such as pipe and other materials, or telephone usage.
- 3) Only four "cars" are mentioned being delivered during the month (though Mercer sometimes built costs of freight into his supply costs when noting them in his ledger). The names of several local companies can be made out: General Crushed Stone, The Defrain Sand Co., The Roebling Construction Co., and Plitt & Co., though some of these provided the bulk of Mercer's materials while others provided piping, fencing, and other construction materials. Including freight, the cost for raw materials for Mercer during August was \$142.92.
- 4) You could count miscellaneous expenses as other construction materials such as piping and fencing, paint, and hardware. Henry even included his phone bill ("telephone messages"). These expenses add up, roughly, to \$185.29.

The Concrete Beat

The following are just a few suggestions to help guide students in this writing activity.

- The chief advantage to using concrete for Mercer was that he could sink his tiles into concrete and create a museum or showroom feel for his tile creations.
- Concrete is also fireproof, and this was Henry Mercer's other main reason for building in concrete. This not only made for a safer place to live, but also ensured that fire would not destroy Mercer's collections, such as his prints and his tile installations.
- While it is very sturdy, concrete is also a somewhat flexible medium to work with. Because Mercer designed Fonthill "from the inside out," using concrete allowed him to shape each room according to its use. Stone or wooden construction might have inhibited Mercer's plans.
- While some might find the gray concrete a bit drab, Fonthill was praised for the way it showcased concrete front-and-center, not covering it up with wooden walls or other features. Mistakes and evidence of how the structure was made are visible for all to see. This practice is called "truth to materials" and was a very important concept to Henry Mercer and the Arts & Crafts Movement. Writers for *Cement Age* would have enjoyed the unabashed display of concrete in Fonthill.
- Like many others in the Arts & Crafts Movement, Mercer longed for a time in American history when machines did not dominate the production of buildings, goods and art. As mentioned above the only machine used to construct Fonthill was a cement mixer. While concrete was a modern material, Mercer worked with it using very simple, almost old-fashioned construction techniques.