

Henry Chapman Mercer Fact Sheet

Henry Chapman Mercer (1856-1930) a noted tile-maker, archaeologist, antiquarian, artist and writer, was a leader in the turn-of-the-century Arts and Crafts Movement.

- Henry Chapman Mercer was born in Bucks County, Pennsylvania in 1856 and died at his home, Fonthill, in Doylestown in 1930.
- After graduating from Harvard in 1879, he was one of the founding members of The Bucks County Historical Society in 1880.
- He studied law at The University of Pennsylvania and was admitted to the Philadelphia bar. Mercer never practiced law but turned his interests towards a career in pre-historic archaeology.
- From 1894 to 1897, Mercer was Curator of American and Pre-historic Archaeology at The University of Pennsylvania Museum, Philadelphia.
- As an archaeologist, he conducted site excavations in the Yucatan Peninsula, Mexico, and in the Ohio, Delaware, and Tennessee River valleys.
- In 1897, Mercer became interested in and began collecting "above ground" archaeological evidence of pre-industrial America.
- In searching out old Pennsylvania German pottery for his collection, Mercer developed a keen interest in the craft. By 1899 he was producing architectural tiles that became world famous.
- At fifty-two Mercer began building the first of three concrete structures: Fonthill, 1908-10, his home; the Moravian Pottery and Tile Works, 1910-12, his tile factory; and The Mercer Museum, 1913-16, which housed his collection of early American artifacts.
- Mercer authored [Ancient Carpenters Tools](#) and [The Bible In Iron](#).
- Fond of animals and birds, Mercer developed a large arboretum with plants native to Pennsylvania on the grounds of Fonthill.
- Mercer received an honorary Doctor of Science degree from Franklin and Marshall College, Lancaster, in 1916, and an honorary Doctor of Law degree from Lehigh University, Bethlehem, in 1929.