



MERCER MUSEUM & FONTHILL CASTLE

Winter-Spring 2014

Newsletter of the Bucks County Historical Society

Vol. 28 Number 1

Fonthill Castle by: Ruth C. Taylor

IN THIS ISSUE:

- HONORING OUR SUPPORTERS
- RECENT ACQUISITIONS
- UPCOMING EVENTS
- MERCER MUSEUM CENTENNIAL
- REDISCOVERIES AT FONTHILL
- AND MORE!



Rutherford Photography



Rutherford Photography

Cocktails at the Castle: Success with a Twist

The Mercer Museum hosted its 2nd Annual Cocktails at the Castle on October 11th and the event was exciting, energizing and a successful celebration of our cultural richness! More than 300 attendees enjoyed the savory specialties provided by our area's culinary experts and the musical entertainment as they participated in the Live and Silent Auctions, which offered unique experiences, get-aways, jewelry, art and handcrafted items. New to the event was the BidPal automated silent auction bidding technology. "It was so engaging to bid on items using my smartphone," stated Grace Deon, Event Co-Chair. "I participated through-

out the night while exploring the Museum and had a great time." The Live Auction included extraordinary items such as a one-of-a-kind Golden Keshi Necklace by jewelry designer Laura Rutkowski of Cowgirl Chile Co. Jewelry, a handcrafted, original Mercer Museum table designed by William Schutt, Christopher Willet's Peaceable Kingdom framed artwork, an around the world photo journey with renowned National Geographic photographer, Bob Krist, a private dinner and bluegrass concert and exciting trips to Cape May, New Jersey, Grand Bahama Island and Southold, New York.

The evening's Mission Appeal focused

on the Mercer Robotics Camp, which allows students to directly engage in "STEM" disciplines of science, technology, engineering and mathematics. The program needs include hardware and software upgrades and enhancements, and our guests generously donated over \$10,000 toward this effort.

The event raised more than \$100,000 for the Mercer Museum's exhibitions, education, preservation and community services.

We are extremely grateful to the sponsors, culinary specialists and generous supporters listed on p.3. Their participation and generosity made this major fund raising event a very special night. ■

Friends on a Mission

The Friends of the Bucks County Historical Society (BCHS) has been an integral part of our organization since the group's founding in May of 1967. Formerly known as the 'Women's Committee,' this energetic and highly dedicated volunteer corps has played a major role in all aspects of the Mercer Museum and Library & Fonthill Castle. "We greatly value the work and mission of BCHS and see our role in advancing the programs, projects and outreach services as a benefit for our community's quality of life," stated Nancy Bergere, a former Friends of BCHS president.

For 47 years, this devoted Friends group



The Friends of BCHS in front of the PA State Capitol building in Harrisburg.

has raised funds to support Fonthill's Old-Fashioned fourth of July, archival supplies for the Mercer Library, reproduction artifacts for our quality educational programs, a Civil War encampment, and History Day.

"With more than 150 members, their fundraising efforts have included diverse activities such as Tavern Nights, bus tours, quarterly educational lectures, and raffles," noted Eileen Shapiro, Special Events Coordinator and the group's staff liaison. "The funds generated by the Friends support important projects that further our education, preservation and community initiatives," added Shapiro. Recognizing the importance of the Mercer Museum's recent expansion project and new galleries for exhibitions, the Friends launched a campaign to secure personal pledges and commitments for the new wing. The gardens of the Museum's

...continued on page 11



Wright Choice

Sponsors Melissa and Phil Eiseman.



Tom Modzelewski enjoys the BidPal technology.



Photo: Wright Choice Photography

Mercer Robotics Students present to Gala guests.

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Owow Cow Creamery, Ottsville
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Seafood, Doylestown
Pigs and Gigs, Lansdale
Plumsteadville Inn,
Plumsteadville
Sand Castle Winery, Erwinna
Sweet Sisters Cupcake
Boutique, Doylestown
The Lucky Cupcake Company,
Pipersville
The Waterwheel Restaurant,
Doylestown

Decorators

Doylestown Flowers & Gifts
Hortulus Farm Garden &
Nursery
Jan Hensch, McCoole's at the His-
toric Red Lion Inn
Mo Better Entertainment
Mom's Flower Shoppe
Spring Valley Nurseries

Entertainment

Jazz it Upright with Colin Weber,
Leo Galbraith-Paul, and Kevin
Blanke
Fast Lane
Where's Pete? dance band

Gala Committee Members

co chairs:
Maureen B. and Mark E. Carlton
Grace M. and Vincent J. Deon

Heather Bernhardt
Laura Biersmith
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Doris Hart Carr
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Mercer Museum and Fonthill Castle...Unique Sites for Your Major Event, Business Meeting, and/or Special Gathering

The Mercer Museum and Fonthill Castle offer unique and culturally rich venues for entertaining in our region. From an intimate party in the Elkins Gallery with its extraordinary art collection, to a special celebration in the Terrace Pavilion, or a business meeting in the Great Hall, your guests will appreciate the unforgettable experiences these National Historic Landmarks offer. With exclusive caterer Memorable Affairs planning your culinary selections, your event will surely be one to remember. To learn more about entertaining at the Mercer Museum, please contact Eileen Shapiro, Special Events Coordinator at 215-345-0210 ext. 132



/eshapiro@mercermuseum.org. For events at Fonthill Castle, please contact Edward Reidell, Site Administrator at 215-348-9461/ereidell@fonthillmuseum.org or contact Memorable Affairs at 215-674-1047. ■

A Planned Gift Rooted in the Past

The *Plus Ultra Society* was established in 1998 to acknowledge individuals who plan for the future of the Mercer Museum and Library & Fonhill Castle by including the Bucks County Historical Society (BCHS) in their estate plans. “*Plus Ultra*,” Latin meaning “more beyond,” became Henry Mercer’s own motto during his lifetime. *Plus Ultra Society* members provide vital support to ensure future generations experience the wonder of Mercer’s legacy. This wonderful testimonial inspires our work, our vision and commitment, and we are truly grateful to Jim and



Jim & Kathy Morrison

Kathy Morrison for their extraordinary expression of devotion and support.

I grew up in Doylestown, very near the Museum, passing it every day as I walked home from the old Borough School. My father, Dr. James D. Morrison, a dentist in Doylestown from 1946 to 1983, and I spent many afternoons in the Museum, and often in the

Library seeking elusive genealogy links in the days before Ancestry.com. When we recently reviewed our estate plan, my wife and I wanted to recognize the importance of both Doylestown and the Museum to my father with a bequest.

I moved away in 1969, and now live in New

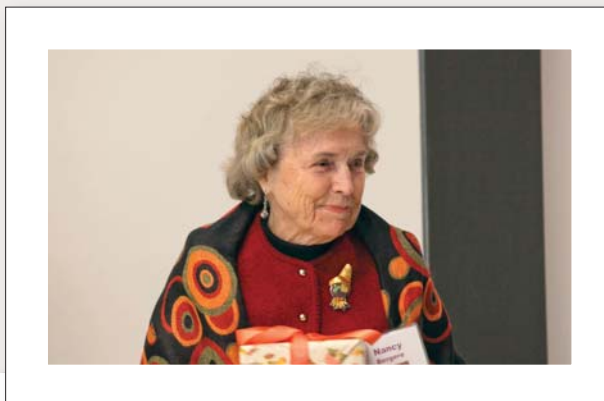
Bern, North Carolina, where my wife and I are active members of the local Historical Society. The town is much like Doylestown—founded in 1710 and a county seat, but it is also the home of Tryon Palace and the first capital of North Carolina. The town and its residents have a great reverence for their heritage, which has made me appreciate even more what Doylestown has in Dr. Mercer’s legacy. We only hope that our future gift will serve to honor both men, and help to continue the exciting growth the Museum has seen since I left.

Jim & Kathy Morrison

New Bern, NC

To inform us of a planned gift or to learn more about planned giving opportunities, please contact Laura Biersmith, Vice President of Development at 215-345-0210 ext. 129/ lbiersmith@mercermuseum.org. ■

Honoring our Supporters



On November 14th, we hosted our Recognition Celebration to honor and pay tribute to our members, donors, sponsors and volunteers. These remarkable individuals provide invaluable support through their donations, their time and their energy. BCHS Board Chairman, Bill Maeglin welcomed the group with a special message....

“Every day our work is devoted to furthering our mission and we recognize that this is only possible because of you and what you do. Our achievements are direct results of your dedication and commitment.”

Nearly 200 guests enjoyed the event, which recognized the support they provided throughout 2012. A special Donor Recognition listing, which will hang in the Great Hall through spring 2014, was unveiled and featured the names of contributors to

major programs and initiatives of the Mercer Museum and Library & Fonhill Castle. For a complete donor listing, please visit our website at www.mercermuseum.org. Four longtime volunteers received special recognition for their decades of involvement in the organization. Kenyon Brown, Bill Mount, Margaret Mumbauer, and James Wiley have more than ninety years of service between them. Their time, talents and energy have been essential to our organization. Additional volunteers recognized for their dedicated hours of service in 2012 included: Nancy Bergere, Doris Charles, Donna Humphrey, Kathleen Schea and Dee Ann Smith. ■



Volunteer awardees (clockwise): Bill Mount, Nancy Bergere, Margaret Mumbauer with BCHS Executive Director, Doug Dolan, and Jim Wiley.

Wright Choice Photography

EITC Approved Businesses Support History Day & Museum Apprentice Program

Fulton Bank, Hatboro Federal Savings and Neuman Company, Inc. are the first three businesses to support the Mercer Museum's educational programs through the Pennsylvania Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) initiative. Approved as an Educational Improvement Organization (EIO), the Bucks County Historical Society's Mercer Museum provides two innovative programs that enhance the curriculum and academic programs of our region's school districts— National History Day and Museum Apprentice Program (MAP).

National History Day engages middle and high school students in a rigorous learning process involving extensive



Special Thanks to Our EITC Businesses

primary and secondary research via libraries, archives, museums, oral history interviews and the exploration of historic sites. The students present their work in a variety of media – including papers, websites, documentary videos, performances and exhibits. Our Museum Apprentice Program is directed primarily toward high school students in the Central Bucks School District and is designed to

offer teen volunteers an opportunity to work in a museum environment while developing leadership, communication, and research skills useful for life beyond high school.

“We are committed to supporting the museum's efforts that directly impact youth education, and Fulton Bank is honored to play a part in the outreach and success of these quality programs,” said Joe Feilmeier, President of Fulton Bank's Premier Division and a Trustee of the Bucks County Historical Society.

To learn more about the EITC program, please contact Laura Biersmith at 215-345-0210 ext. 129/lbiersmith@mercermuseum.org. ■

Circus & Games Exhibits



Sells-Floto Circus Poster, c. 1930. Courtesy of the Tegge Circus Archives Collection.

On January 25, the Mercer Museum opened two new traveling exhibitions. The first, *Step Right Up! Behind the Scenes of the Circus Big Top, 1890-1965*, explores the history and pageantry of the circus as a grand theatrical tradition, and includes dozens of colorful posters, costume artifacts, photographs and oral histories from past performers. The exhibit is being traveled by ExhibitsUSA, a national division of the Mid-America Arts Alliance and the National Endowment for the Arts. It will run through March 16.

The second show, *Playing Together: Games*, is a hands-on exhibit that invites kids of all ages to explore and play games from around the world and across the centuries. Included are games of

strategy, math, luck and physical coordination. The focal point of the exhibit is an oversized chess board with giant playing pieces. Also included is a “House of Cards” play area, where visitors can try out a variety of other board games while enjoying the exhibit.

Supplementing the interactive portion of the *Games* exhibit is a display of original board games from the 1800s and early

1900s from the Judy and Bud Newman Collection. These early games feature stunning color lithography, interesting playing pieces, and intriguing content. *Playing Together: Games* is designed, built

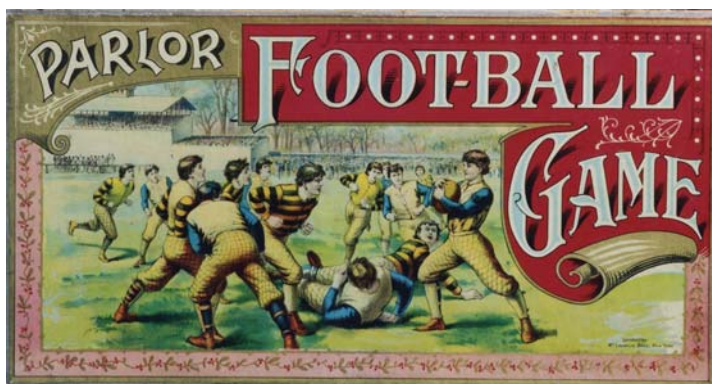
and traveled by the Children's Museum of Memphis for the Youth Museum Exhibit Collaborative.

Accompanying the *Step Right Up!* exhibit is a diverse schedule of public programs developed in collaboration with the Philadelphia School of Circus Arts, and with the exhibit's curator, Timothy Noel Tegge. Tegge joined us for the show's opening reception, and presented a series of programs. Staff from the Philadelphia School of Circus Arts performed at the opening celebration, and will present a series of



Timothy Noel Tegge, Curator of the “Step Right Up!” exhibit, Tegge will present a series of programs – some dressed in his ring-master's garb – at the Mercer Museum in January. Courtesy of the Tegge Circus Archives Collection.

demonstrations on selected Saturdays in February and March. A special performance “ring” will be a feature of the exhibit itself, and school staff will perform aerials and wire walking right in the gallery. Finally, two circus arts workshops are planned, one for kids and the other for teens and adults. Participants will be introduced to juggling, wire walking and other traditional circus skills. See our calendar for more information on dates and times. ■



Parlor Football Game. McLoughlin Brothers, New York City, 1890s. Collection of Judy and Bud Newman. One of the original board games to be exhibited alongside the traveling exhibit.

Seed Display, Guest House Register Among Recent Acquisitions

Even now in the depths of winter, we find comfort knowing that the return of spring is not far away. With springtime, of course, comes gradually lengthening days, warm showers – and planting season. With this in mind, now is a perfect time to highlight one of the museum’s recent acquisitions – a countertop rack intended to display the products of Bristol’s famed Landreth Seed Company. The artifact is a gift of one of the museum’s most frequent contributors to the collections, David B. Long.

In 1784, Scottish immigrant, David Landreth relocated his fledgling seed company from Montreal, Canada to Philadelphia. Convinced the mid-Atlantic region’s climate would be more congenial for his seed business, Landreth ambitiously began expanding his firm in the Philadelphia area. Soon, his clients included the likes of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and Joseph Bonaparte – brother to Napoleon – who had settled on an estate in nearby New Jersey.

David Landreth quickly became known as an innovator and horticultural genius. In 1798, his company introduced the zinnia to the United States, and in 1811 created the first truly white potato (previous tubers had been yellow-tinged). In 1820, the “Love Apple” (better known today as the tomato), was perfected on the Landreth farm. Eight years later, Landreth, along with his son, David Landreth II, helped found the Pennsylvania Horticultural



Seed Display Rack. Landreth Seed Company, Bristol, Bucks County, c. 1910. Gift of David B. Long, 2013.

Society – still active today as the sponsor of the annual Philadelphia Flower Show.

In 1847, David Landreth II moved the company’s production to Bloomsdale Farms in Bristol, Bucks County. Just five years later, in 1852, Landreth provided Commodore Matthew Perry with thousands of pounds of vegetable seeds to take with him on his grand voyage to open trade with Japan. When Perry returned, he brought with him the first Japanese shrub and plant species ever to be imported to the United States for the Landreth nurseries.

The Landreth Company continued in business, guided by David Landreth’s son, Burnet, and other members of the family, well into the twentieth century. However, in 1942 the firm was sold, and passed through a series of hands, emerging eventually as a much smaller entity limited to packaging and distributing grass seed. More recently, new owners have sought to restore the Landreth name, and re-establish the company as a mail order seed business specializing in heirloom varieties and capitalizing on the firm’s history as the “oldest seed house in America.”

In addition to the display rack, the museum also acquired an early twentieth century advertising inkwell featuring the Landreth

Company’s “Red Rock” tomato variety. Donor David Long also contributed a host of other items in addition to the Landreth artifacts, among them a baseball uniform from a Rohm & Haas Company baseball team and several local Boy Scout items.

Yet another interesting acquisition from 2013 is a guest register from the “Fell Guest House” in Holicong, Bucks County.

Acquired at a local auction, the book spans the years 1919 to 1938, and includes the signatures of many of the county’s more illustrious full-time or part-time residents. In fact, the period covered by the register is one in which Bucks County was growing in reputation as a popular des-

tination and retreat for artists, writers, actors, and other well-heeled tourists and ex-urban migrants. Among those who enjoyed the hospitality of the Fells were the artist George W. Sotter, anthropologist Margaret Mead, and painter Casimir Sienkiewicz, perhaps better known for his role as a banker, economist and first chairman of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority.

The book also documents the social scene in the Doylestown-Buckingham-Solebury area in the 1920s and ‘30s. It seems that the guest house was a popular site for birthday, card and dinner parties – and overnight getaways – for natives as well as out-of-towners. Local names include those of realtor J. Carroll Malloy, Judge Hiram Keller, physician Frank Swartzlander, antiquarian Henry D. Paxson, and watercolor artist and journal editor, Edward A. Trego. A few of the more artistic signatories in the guest book, like Frank Swartzlander and George Sotter, were even inspired to add pen and ink sketches along with their names.

The exact location and proprietors of the “Fell Guest House” are not identified with certainty in the register, but further research will yield more clues. Based on one inscription, it seems the property was owned by an Edward and Anna Fell. Anyone with more information is invited to contact Cory Amsler, 215-345-0210,



“Fell Guest House.” Drawing by George W. Sotter, 1937. George Sotter and his wife Alice signed their names next to this drawing in the guest register for the Fell Guest House. Alice’s note, “another happy evening spent with Edward and Anna – celebrating their wedding anniversary,” suggests that Edward and Anna Fell were the proprietors of the small inn, located in Holicong, Bucks County. Museum Purchase, 2013.



Buffalo Bills Game Jersey. Worn by Bryan Scott (Central Bucks East Class of 1999), 2009-2012. Gift of Bryan Scott, 2013.

ext. 127, or camsler@mercermuseum.org.

Other items added to the Mercer Museum collection in the second half of 2013 include a “Dump the Pump” t-shirt from the 1980s (given by David Groff), a 1940s-50s Civil Defense helmet and related items once belonging to Samuel Moore of Bristol, Bucks County (museum purchase), an advertising sign for a Bristol distillery (museum purchase), and two wedding dresses and other items of attire from a Bucks County Quaker family (given by Dorothy Cloud Reed, and described in the next article).

Finally, the museum was also pleased to receive a professional football game jersey and sports trading card from local athlete, Bryan Scott, a graduate of Central Bucks East High School. After playing college football at Penn State University, Scott was selected by the Atlanta Falcons in the second round of the 2003 National Football League draft. In his ten-year career, Scott played professionally with the Atlanta Falcons, Tennessee Titans, New Orleans Saints and Buffalo Bills. In addition to his football skills, Scott is also a talented musician, playing drums, saxophone and piano. His “Pick Your Passion Foundation for the Arts” helps expose youth in underserved communities to the visual and performing arts.

For more information about these recent acquisitions, and thousands of other items in the Mercer and Fonhill collections, visit our on-line catalog, “RolloPAC,” accessible via our website at www.mercermuseum.org. ■

Gift of Wedding Dresses

The Mercer Museum has recently acquired two wedding dresses donated by Dorothy Cloud Reed, a Philadelphia native now living in Lansdale. A plain tan silk dress with a fitted bodice, leg-of-mutton sleeves and a full long skirt was worn by the donor's great grandmother, Elizabeth Knight James (1813-1890) in 1836 at her wedding at Byberry Friends Meeting House, located just over the Bucks County line in Philadelphia County. A matching tan silk quilted shawl, completed the ensemble. The other dress, a tubular-shaped off-white silk dress with a belt and straight train, was worn by the donor's mother, Evelyn Tomlinson Cloud (1894-1985) at her wedding in 1917 at the West Philadelphia Friends Meeting House.

According to the Friends Historical Library at Swarthmore College, traditional Quaker weddings followed a “Testimony of Plainness,”

which expected apparel to be modest and simple. In traditional Quaker weddings, the bride and groom marry each other and do not involve any clergy. A wedding certificate is drawn-up with the betrothed's names, date of the ceremony and vows, and is signed by all wedding attendees.

Other donated objects include two wool monogrammed blankets, an early twentieth century cotton bodice, and a bustled petticoat, circa 1877. All are connected with the Knight, James and Tomlinson families of Bucks County. The library has also received a book written by the donor, *Five Hundred Quaker Grandparents*, a family history that includes 50 years of genealogical research. ■



Quaker Wedding Dress. Worn by Elizabeth Knight James for her 1836 wedding at Byberry Friends Meeting. Gift of Dorothy Cloud Reed, 2013.



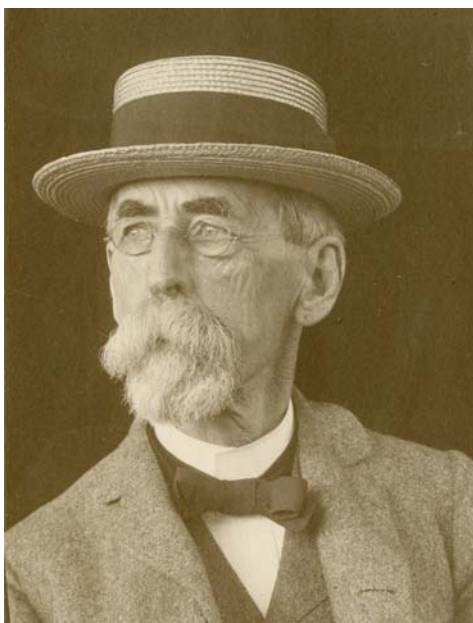
Tomlinson-Cloud Wedding. Evelyn Tomlinson (1894-1985), daughter of Mary and Augustus Tomlinson of Byberry, married James Fenton Cloud (1874-1975) at the West Philadelphia Friends Meeting House in 1917. The bride's wedding dress is now in the collection of the Mercer Museum. Gift of Dorothy Cloud Reed, 2013.

John A. Anderson

One of the many jewels to be found in the Mercer Museum's Library is the photographic collection of John A. Anderson. His photographs and glass negatives, numbering in the thousands, include a glimpse of what it was like at the turn of the century in the New Hope/Lambertville area. They also depict what life was like in many parts of the United States from the late nineteenth century into the early twentieth century, and at the same time provide a catalog of flora - some specimens that may not exist today!

John Anderson was born in Flemington, NJ in 1829 and died in Lambertville, NJ in 1917. His life spanned most of a century and, through photography, Anderson invites us into his personal life, showing many friends and family members, local houses and churches, and typical social and cultural activities of the day. As a superintendent of the Pennsylvania Railroad System, he seems to have enjoyed travel and created many beautiful photos as souvenirs of his trips.

The general collection can be broken into smaller groups of photographs focusing on specific areas of interest, including pictures of summer homes in Upstate New York and Massachusetts; rural life in parts of North Carolina and Georgia; the canals and bridges along the Delaware River; and many of the famous missions in California; all taken with something of an editorial eye by Anderson. In addition to these reminders of everyday life, Anderson was keenly interested in botany, and created an impressive number of studies of trees, flowers and fungi.



Portrait of J.A. Anderson, vol 4:959. 1896



Goose Plum, Marietta, Georgia, vol 12:80. 1900



Enjoying the Kennebunkport Beach, vol 16:29. 1903

The James A. Michener Art Museum recognizes Anderson's photography as

fine art. In their Bucks County Arts Catalog, they note that his daguerreotypes and photographs exhibit "a modern realism typical of a much later style known as picture stories."

Mercer Museum Library volunteers are presently indexing John A. Anderson's collection, so the images can be searched by topics and keywords. When this project is complete, Anderson's great photographic achieve-

ments will become more accessible to the general public. ■

Collections on the Road!

The Mercer Museum's loan program continues to be strong and a great source of pride, traveling to prestigious institutions and educating audiences young and old. Visit our artifact at the following institution:

National Museum of American Jewish History, Philadelphia, PA

"Chasing Dreams: Baseball and Jews in America"
March 13 – October 26, 2014

This exhibit explores the role that baseball has played in furthering our nation's diversity and equality. Through dynamic stories and intriguing artifacts, the exhibit will

engage visitors and encourage them to begin their own discussions of heritage, culture and adversity. The Mercer Museum is lending the 1960 Little League Championship bat from Levittown, PA. The bat is inscribed with the names of the players and coaches. The names help tell our nation's story of people coming together from different religious and ethnic backgrounds for the love of the game.

For more information on this artifact, please visit our on-line catalog RolloPAC and search accession number MM2003.31.002.

200 YEARS AGO IN BUCKS COUNTY...

In September of 1814, the original New Hope – Lambertville Bridge was completed. This wooden covered bridge replaced the service provided by Coryell's Ferry, and gave a boost to commerce between the communities on both sides of the Delaware River. The designer, Lewis Wernwag, was nationally known for his covered bridges. In 1841 a flood damaged the original bridge. A year later a second wooden covered bridge was constructed. The present steel bridge connecting Pennsylvania and New Jersey was completed in 1904 at a cost of \$63,818.81.



J.A. Anderson Collection, Vol 5:75. From N.J. Shore, South of Bridge. December 1896.

*From N.J. Shore, South of Bridge
Lambertville*

One Hundred Years of the Mercer Museum, 1914-2014

One hundred years ago, the building of the Mercer Museum was well underway. Begun in the spring of 1913, the museum's concrete foundation, walls and floors had risen gradually through the labors of a small human work crew and a horse named "Lucy." Henry Mercer himself supervised the work, serving as architect and engineer, though he conveyed his designs and directives through his construction foreman, William Labs.

Over the course of 1913 the foundation had been laid, and the lower walls of the museum were complete. Mercer noted in his construction notebook that he had purchased a large quantity of lumber for use in forming the concrete structure – including old fencing and boards that had once comprised the bleachers of the former baseball grounds. Prior to its acquisition by the Historical Society, the museum property had served as a community baseball diamond, among other recreational uses.

By May 30, 1914, Mercer noted that the museum's "1st gallery level" (today's Central Court) had been completed, "with all rooms and alcoves cast."

The Society's earlier Elkins Building had also been finished. In his notes, Mercer describes his ratio for the building's concrete mixture: 1 part cement to 2 ½ parts sand, to 5 parts stone. Though he also details some alternative concrete mixes being employed in other building projects in the area, he does not indicate that he decided to change his formula.

As the summer of 1914 progressed, Mercer began to fret that his enterprise was falling behind schedule – due in part to repeated breakdowns of his gasoline-

powered concrete mixer. The mixer had been brought over to the museum project after it had been employed successfully in erecting the garage at Fontheill. Finally, Mercer claimed to have identified the problem. The delays were not the result of mechanical problems, he wrote, but instead were likely deliberate sabotage by a disgruntled worker.

According to Mercer, the mixer's operator – a workman by the name of Joseph Sentman, or Senftman – had been intentionally putting the machine out of order.

Sentman had been employed by Mercer on the garage project, and at one point had led a "strike," refusing to work. Mercer claimed this action was "without grievance" and does not elaborate further on any issues that may have led to the work stoppage. In any case, Mercer had fired Sentman in the summer of 1913, only to hire him back the following winter on the museum project. By mid-summer of 1914, Mercer's patience again exhausted, he fired Sentman for "drinking, demoralizing the men, and holding back output."

As we celebrate the museum's centennial, future issues of this newsletter will continue to chronicle the building's progress between 1914 and 1916. ■



MERCER MUSEUM UNDER CONSTRUCTION, C. 1914. *Through 2016, the Historical Society will be celebrating the centennial anniversary of the construction of the Mercer Museum. This image, probably taken by local photographer Geneva Clay of the Clay Studio, Doylestown, is from Henry Mercer's construction records. Mercer Library Collection.*

“Adopt-a-Firefighting Artifact” Campaign

In 2015, the Mercer Museum will present a major exhibition on the history of firefighting in America, with an emphasis on the Philadelphia area. Following up on the success of a previous “Adopt-an-Artifact” initiative in conjunction with our 2013 Civil War exhibit, we are now launching a similar effort to raise funds for the treatment of more than thirty firefighting-related objects and works of art.



FIREMAN'S PARADE HAT. *Hibernia Engine Company, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1845-1865. Gift of the Volunteer Firemen's Association of Philadelphia, 1919. One of a number of firefighting artifacts needing conservation treatment in the Mercer Museum collection. Made from pressed felt, and painted with the volunteer fire company's name and symbol, such decorative hats were typically worn for ceremonial purposes rather than for protection at a fire.*

Through the “Adopt-an-Artifact” program, BCHS members and other members of the public can have a major impact on the preservation of a critical part of our history. Museum staff have identified the artifacts most in need of conservation treatment. These have been carefully examined by specialists to determine the appropriate treatment for each. Treatments will be designed both to ensure the objects' long-term preservation, and to clean and prepare the artifacts for exhibition.

Artifacts requiring treatment include parade hats and helmets, fire buckets, insurance company fire marks, firemen's horns or speaking trumpets, apparatus models and other items. A complete listing is posted on the Mercer Museum's website. Simply go to: <http://www.mercermuseum.org/join-and-support/adopt-an-artifact/>. Your gift in the amount indicated will entitle the donor to a “certificate of adoption,” plus recognition in museum catalog records and in label copy for the planned 2015 firefighting exhibit. Gifts can be made in the name of the donor, on the part of a group or organization, or in memory of a loved one – perhaps themselves a firefighter!

For more information, or to have the list of needy artifacts sent directly to you,

please contact the Mercer Museum's V.P. for Collections and Interpretation, Cory Amsler, at 215-345-0210 ext. 127, or at camsler@mercermuseum.org. ■

Repairs Completed at Mercer



Much needed leak remediation work on the Mercer Library roof was completed by Happ Contractors in 2013. The work ensures the safety and preservation of our collections for future generations. Concrete sections of the roof were patched and a portion received a new membrane. All work on our museums follows the Secretary of Interior's guidelines for historic preservation. The research library wing dates to 1934 and was designed by architect, Oscar Martin. The project was generously supported by a \$10,000 capital improvement grant from Foundations Community Partnership and a planned gift from the Estate of Victoria P. Herd.

Love in the Afternoon

On Sunday afternoon, February 9, an ensemble of talented storytellers and musicians from around the Delaware Valley will gather to celebrate the coming Valentine's Day in poetry, story and song. The special storytelling concert, entitled “Love in All its Shapes and Forms,” is open to the public, and presented in collaboration with Ray Gray, a Doylestown-based storyteller.

The performers include Gerry Fierst, a featured teller at the National Storytelling Festival in Tennessee and former artistic director for the Jewish Storytelling Center at the 92nd Street YMCA in New York City; Philip Orr, an eclectic composer and professor



DOYLESTOWN STORYTELLER RAY GRAY. *In collaboration with the Mercer Museum, Gray will produce and present the multi-artist storytelling concert, “Love in All Its Shapes and Forms,” at the museum on Sunday, February 9. Photo courtesy of Ray Gray.*

of Music at Westminster College of the Arts at Rider University; Deborah Pieri, a Chester County schoolteacher and the recipient of multiple grants and awards for storytelling and teaching excellence; Denise Valentine, a rostered artist with the Commonwealth Speakers Bureau of the Pennsylvania Humanities Council; and Bill Wood, whose latest recording of stories, entitled *Bill & Vick's Picks: Spooky Tales, Vol. 1*, received a Parents' Choice Silver Honor Award.

The concert will run from 2 to 4 p.m., with light refreshments served during intermission in the program. Tickets are \$15 (\$12 for members). Call 215-348-9461, ext. 210 to reserve your seats!

Get Your Kicks! Route 66 Exhibit Coming this Summer



The Iconic Highway

The iconic highway featured in the Bobby Troupe song, and that author John Steinbeck referred to as “The Mother

Road,” is the subject of a new traveling exhibit making its debut at the Mercer Museum this summer. *America’s Road: The Journey of Route 66*, opens on Saturday, May 31 and runs through August 24. The show is produced and traveled by NRG! Exhibits of Kirkland, Washington.

Made famous in song and story, the historic “Route 66” is thoroughly emblematic of the American experience in the twentieth century. Early in its history, the road served as a conduit for migrants fleeing the Dust Bowl, hoping desperately for better opportunities in California. Later it became a major tourist route, and a monument to America’s automotive culture. Though much changed, the highway still stretches nearly 2,500 miles and passes through eight states. Like the nineteenth-century’s great wagon trails, it provided a pathway for the migration of thousands of people from the Midwest to the Pacific Coast in the modern era.

Today, thousands of people from across the country and around the world drive all or portions of Historic Route 66 each year. For some, it’s simply an exercise in nostalgia. For others, it’s a deeply visceral exploration of hundred years of highway culture on the “Main Street of America.” Seeking not only what can still be found, but also what has been lost, travelers discover thriving relics – well preserved examples of

highway architecture and automotive culture – as well as decaying ruins of the road’s former glory. Among present-day pilgrims traveling Route 66 was the exhibit’s developer, Seth Leary of NRG! Exhibits. Together with his son, Adrian, they traveled the entire length of the highway in an original, un-restored 1965 Ford

Mustang, in preparation for the exhibition. The Mustang forms a centerpiece of the exhibit, and is a visual metaphor for the show’s title.

The exhibit’s narrative takes visitors from the highway’s opening in 1926, up to the present day. Graphic displays, props, artifacts, interpretive text, and interactive experiences – including a drive-in theater and a period radio show – help deliver the story. Themes include

American migration, the evolution of automotive travel, roadside architecture, and technological and cultural innovation. Included with the exhibit is a photo essay created by photographer and author, Russell Olsen. Olsen researched and photographed 75 classic service stations, motor courts, restaurants and other sites along Route 66. In the exhibit, the sites and structures are shown as they appeared during the mid-twentieth century, and as they look today.

To augment the traveling portion of the exhibit, the Mercer Museum is working with several local collectors of vintage automobiles and other items of automotive culture. Several iconic vehicles, along with roadside signage and memorabilia are expected to be interwoven into the show. Among them will be a 1969 Mercedes 600 (short-wheelbase), once owned by Elvis Presley, and now part of the extensive collection of Gene Epstein of Wrightstown, Bucks County. Purchased in Hollywood, and originally registered in Tennessee, the car was purportedly one of Elvis’ favorites. He kept the vehicle for six or seven years before passing it on as a gift to a friend. The Presley Mercedes will join several other classic cars from the 1940s through the 1960s in the exhibit, including a rare Oldsmobile “Woody” wagon and a 1957 Ford Thunderbird. ■



CLASSIC CAR COLLECTOR GENE EPSTEIN WITH HIS “ELVIS” MERCEDES. *The car, once owned by Elvis Presley, will be included in the Mercer Museum’s exhibit, America’s Road: The Journey of Route 66, opening on May 31.*

America’s Road: Route 66 Inspired Walking Tour

In August, 2014, take a step back in time and enjoy an evening stroll through Doylestown history! These family-friendly walking tours, inspired by our America’s Road: *The Journey of Route 66* exhibit opening on May 31, 2014, will focus on Doylestown’s automotive history.

BCHS Library Collections Highlighted in Thornton Wilder’s *Our Town*



The Mercer Museum & Library collaborated with Central Bucks West High School’s Theater Director, Brian Weiner for the school’s fall 2013 performance of Thornton Wilder’s *Our Town*. The cast utilized images of Bucks County residents from our library collection as inspiration for their characters. Images from our collection were used as a rotating backdrop highlighting historic Doylestown locations such as Main Street, the Doylestown Inn, Doylestown Dairy, Fountain House and more!

Friends on a Mission *continued from page 2*
new entrance showcase a recognition plaque for the group’s generosity and commitment.

Upcoming programs hosted by the Friends of BCBS at the Mercer Museum include:

- **Pennsylvania German Easter Egg Decorating**, Monday, March 17, 12:30 p.m., free
- **Lenape Native Americans**, Sunday, April 6, 1:00 p.m., \$15/person (\$12/ Friends of BCBS)

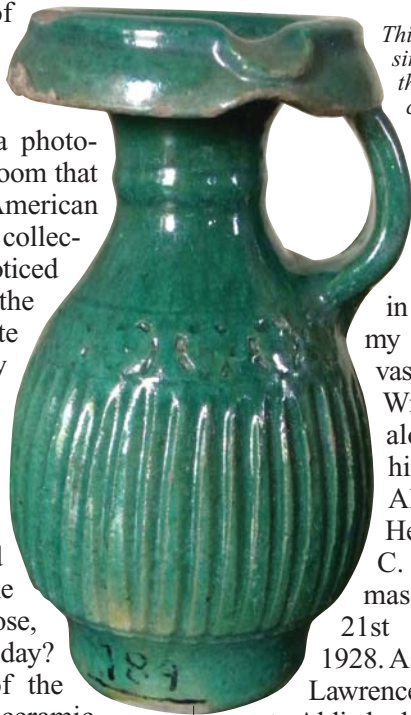
To learn more about the Friends of BCBS, their programs and activities, or to join this special group, please visit our website, www.mercermuseum.org or contact Eileen Shapiro, Special Events Coordinator at 215-345-0210 ext. 132/eshapiro@mercermuseum.org ■

Columbus Room Niche Mystery

One of the rewards of looking at old photographs are the wonderful details that can be discovered. While looking at a photograph of the Columbus Room that is a part of the Historic American Building Survey (HABS) collection, the staff at Fonthill noticed an interesting detail. In the niche above the concrete dresser, which currently has a candlestick, a ceramic vessel can be seen.

It has long been known that over time certain objects were moved from their original location and stored in other parts of the house. So the question arose, where is this vessel today? After some searching of the likely storage areas, a ceramic vessel was found with the right shape as the one in the HABS photograph. On the vessel, we discovered the number 182 in a triangle. This object was one that Henry Mercer had cataloged. Throughout the castle, there are about 184 objects that have numbers painted within a triangle. These numbers correspond to a catalog Mercer created noting what he knew about these special items, where he got the object and sometimes who gave it to him. Object 182 was described by Mercer as such:

182: "Very valuable and rare and beautiful Etruscan vase or pitcher or bowl – decorated with 3 rows of encircling animals horned & unhorned – bulls & cows?? . A masterpiece as beautiful & rich & graceful as any I have seen of its kind, in any museum, where this type of vase is generally shown. Height to top of ears 12 ¼ inches. This vase & the following No. 183 were brought from Florence (my Uncle Timothy Bigelow Lawrence's Villa Torrigiani) in 1872, when Aldie was built or soon after – where they were the property of my "Aunt Lela," Mrs. T. B. Lawrence, after her husband's death. They stood on one of the shelves of carved Renaissance shelved cupboard in the corner of the Library to the left of the fireplace – always, I thought at great risk of



This photograph shows a similar flair in the rim of this late nineteenth century Moroccan earthenware vase. You can see the "184" at the bottom of the vase. Photo: Vance Koehler.

breakage by servants in house cleaning. After my aunt's death both vases went to my brother William R. Mercer along with my gift to him of my ½ share of Aldie & its contents. He gave to me, Henry C. Mercer, as a Christmas gift on December 21st (Friday morning) 1928. As several of my Uncle Lawrence's heirlooms brought to Aldie had, I heard, been bought by him at "one of the Paris Exhibitions" these might have been there purchased at the 1855 or 1867 Fairs & taken to Florence when he was U. S. Consul General there."

We now knew we found the object that was in the niche. But reading a few entries down from triangle object 182 we read the following entry:

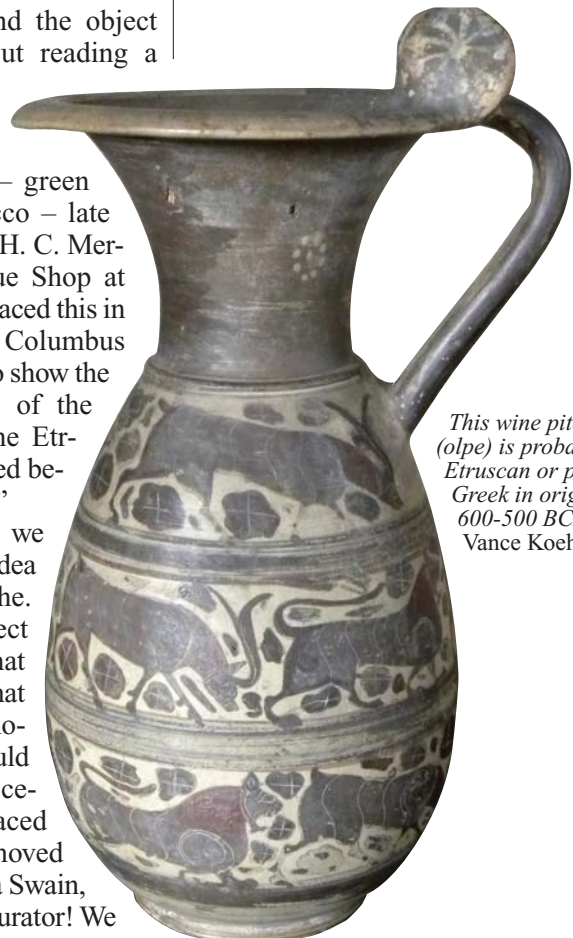
184: "Moorish vase – green glaze – made in Morocco – late 19th century. Bought by H. C. Mercer at Benoliel's Antique Shop at Gibraltar about 1905. I placed this in the glazed alcove in the Columbus Room March 15, 1929, to show the similarity in the shape of the flared rim, to that of the Etruscan Vase No. 182 placed beside it in the same niche."

With this information we now had a more complete idea of what resided in the niche. Not only was triangle object 182 there, we now knew that there was a second object that could not be seen in the photograph. In addition, we could confirm that both of these ceramic vessels had been placed there by Mercer and not moved there at a later time by Laura Swain, Mercer's housekeeper or a curator! We



The red circle shows the Etruscan vase in the tiled niche in the Columbus Room. This photo is part of the HABS collection that can be found at Library of Congress web site. It is thought that this picture was taken in the mid-1960s. Photo: Jack E. Boucher.

searched the storage areas and found the small Moorish vase. Fonthill staff is currently working on placing both objects back in the niche so that today's visitors can examine for themselves the beauty of these objects and the similarities in shape that so intrigued Henry Mercer. ■



This wine pitcher (olpe) is probably Etruscan or possibly Greek in origin circa 600-500 BCE. Photo: Vance Koehler.

Brocade Tile Panel



Moravian Pottery & Tile Works, Doylestown, 1916. Originally installed on the façade of Clayton High School near St. Louis, Missouri, this Moravian Tile panel was given to the Mercer Museum in 2011 by James Dautcher, in memory of J. David Miller, former trustee and chair of the Historical Society's Collections Committee. The panel formed part of a tile frieze, or mural, set above the doorway to the high school. Recently installed in the Mercer Museum's stair tower, it joins four others also on view, given to the collection in 1990 by Robert and Joyce Byers. A sixth panel, which completed the original frieze, is in the collection of the Moravian Pottery & Tile Works.

Visit Our New Bucks Mont History Day Website

The Bucks and Montgomery Counties Regional History Day competition now has its own website. Thanks to funding through the iPromise Grant from Volpe-Koenig, P.C., Intellectual Property Law, we are now able to reach our audience in a whole new way. Students, teachers, and parents will be able to access registration and contest information, curriculum and standards tie-ins, project examples and so much more!

Please visit us at our new site: nhdbucksmont.org

Henry Mercer's Wagon Journey of 1885

Editor's note: In 1885 Henry Mercer travelled with a friend, Tom Plummer, by horse and wagon from Pennsylvania to Virginia over a period of twenty four days. He sought out Mercer family locations (e.g., Aldie, the Virginia town founded by an ancestor, and Belmont, the plantation where his great-aunt Margaret Mercer's girls' school had been located). Mercer visited Civil War sites and encountered many Civil War veterans along the way. He sketched Indian rock carvings found on boulders in the Susquehanna River, designs he later used in the tile floor of the State Capitol building at Harrisburg. He kept an extensive journal which resulted in a series of articles submitted to the newspaper following his return. An excerpt from those articles is included here:

A Wagon Journey From Doylestown to Williamsburg, Virginia

Containing some account of the manners and customs of the people and of the adventures that befell the writer and his friend on their way through parts of Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia, in the year eighteen hundred and eighty-five.

— *By H. C. Mercer*

Chapter I.

After some delay in our final arrangement T— (Tom Plummer) and I left home on the morning of May the ____, 1885. Our horse started off at a brisk pace, and as we drove through Doylestown not a few passers-by stopped to say good bye, or to scrutinize the large leather boot strapped under our phaeton (wagon), in which was stored our baggage, some provisions, and a complete outfit of India rubber coats and blankets. The large umbrella swung under all did not escape attention. This could be opened over our heads, and being adjusted in a hole in the seat between us, formed an excellent protection in case of rain or hot sun.

Driving rapidly though a well cultivated rolling country, not as yet unknown to us, we soon crossed the line of Montgomery county and hastened by turnpike and by-road to the southward.

The gladness of spring was in the earthly freshness of new furrows that floated on the breeze, in the mist that hung upon the ridges and about the woods, whence came a continuous cawing of crows. Farmers shouted at their horses; there were flashes upon the hillsides where moving plowshares gleamed in the sunbeams.

Country people in "buggies" and heavy laden wagons passed us on the roads, and not a few men on foot with the well-known mark of tramp and vagabond upon them...

Chapter II. (on the way to Yellow Springs, Chester County)

...At last as it was past noon and no house appearing in sight, we halted after

the manner of gypsies for our mid-day meal, under a locust tree by the roadside. Unharnessing the horse, and feeding him from the oats bag for want of a box, we ate with great relish our luncheon, consisting of baked potatoes, bread, eggs, canned peaches and several mutton chops brought from home, the latter holding upon pointed sticks we warmed excellently over a small fire made of twigs and dried grass. No description could easily recall our impressions of this beautiful spot. The air was soft and laden with the perfume of locust blossoms, which, fluttering from the boughs overhead, strewed the ground at our feet. No bush or fence interrupted our view of the panorama beneath. We conversed, argued, wrote and sketched while several hours slipped by; twice lying upon the bank at full length, the horse browsing by our side, we almost fell asleep, until the longer shadows cast by the trees reminded us of the approach of evening.

Having re-harnessed the horse and left him tied to the fence, we walked some distance down the road in search of a spring, which we had noticed on our way several hours before. On our return the animal touched with the whip, much to our surprise, almost walked out of the shafts, and it appeared that a well known practical joke had been played upon us, some boys, whom we had before seen on the road, having taken advantage of our absence to secretly unfasten the traces. They now sat on a fence near the bottom of the hill and seeing the success of their joke, set up a derisive shout, but on T jumping out of the wagon to give chase ran down the hillside and quickly disappeared in the wood... ■

Be a Judge for National History Day!

National History Day is a highly regarded academic program for elementary and secondary students. History Day is an experience that positively impacts students throughout Bucks and Montgomery Counties. It helps students further develop their research skills and bolsters their confidence, which ultimately improves their academic success!

This year's Bucks and Montgomery Counties Regional Competition will take place on Saturday, March 22, 2014 at Ursinus College in Collegeville, PA. Students in grades 6 through 12 compete, as an individual or in a group, in five categories: Exhibits, Documentaries, Websites, Performances, and Historical Papers. The theme for this year's competition is *Rights & Responsibilities in History*.

An expertise in history is not necessary to become a History Day Judge. All we need are volunteers who enjoy working with young people!

For more information about becoming a judge for History Day, please visit our NHD Bucks Mont website at www.nhdbucksmont.org/current-contest/judge-information/ or email us at historyday@mercermuseum.org.

Reader's Inquiry



After reading "The Story of the Long White Baby Dress" in the July-December 2012 newsletter, Mercer Museum member Lynda Skaddan met with Curatorial Assistant, Carol Jones to learn about the Skaddan family baby dress. Although some of the story of Lynda's dress will remain a "history mystery," Carol was able to provide Lynda with some information regarding the background and an approximate date of her dress.



I WANT YOU to volunteer for Fonthill's Old-Fashioned Fourth of July Celebration, on Friday, July 4. Since it's Fonthill's biggest event of the year, we need an army of volunteers to help with games, crafts, admissions, and so much more! Volunteers receive an event staff t-shirt, snacks and cool place to get out of the heat. For more information or to volunteer, e-mail fhmail@fonthillmuseum.org or call 215-348-9461.

Review on Trip Advisor



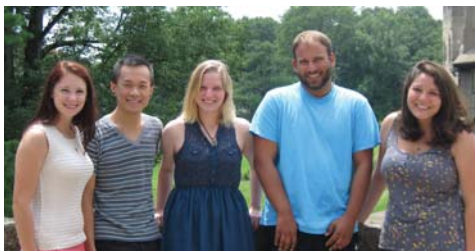
It is amazing what you can do with poured concrete. The Mercer Museum is an architectural wonder as well as being filled with the most eclectic collection of early American tools and daily use items. The items may look like a jumble and not much is explained or even identified but the fact that these implements are saved from being melted down (metal objects and tools) or burned for firewood makes this one of the most important collections of how our Founding Fathers made their way in this new land and will be studied by many scholars for years. This is a great museum for kids because there are some experiential sections through the 7 floors...

By Rosie T. ■

Mercer in the News

The Mercer Museum was the subject of a four-page article in the February issue of *Popular Woodworking Magazine*. The piece was written by the magazine's senior editor, who toured the museum in November 2013, and took numerous photographs which can be seen in the article.





Summer Internship Program

The Mercer Museum continues to collaborate with area colleges and universities providing students with an educational and enjoyable internship experience. This past summer the museum had over 10 college students engaged in all departments, gaining firsthand experience in curatorial and archival management, public programming and marketing, and general museum practices.

The museum is currently accepting resumes for its summer 2014 program. Requirements include: current enrollment in a college program, two professional/academic references, and a love of history! For more information on the museum's program, please contact Sara Good at sgood@mercermuseum.org or 215-345-0210 ext 119. ■

General Information

Check out our website at
www.mercermuseum.org

Mercer Museum & Museum Shop

84 South Pine Street, Doylestown, PA 18901-4930

PHONE: 215-345-0210 FAX: 215-230-0823

HOURS: Monday-Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.
Sunday, noon-5 p.m.

Also at the Mercer Museum: **Research Library**

HOURS: Tuesday-Thursday, 1-5 p.m.
Friday & Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

Fonthill Castle

East Court Street & Route 313,
Doylestown, PA 18901-4930

PHONE: 215-348-9461 FAX: 215-348-9462

HOURS: Monday-Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.
Sunday, noon-5 p.m.

(Guided tours only; reservations suggested)

Members receive unlimited free admission to Mercer Museum and Library & Fonthill Castle.

Newsletter

Gayle Shupack, Editor

Molly Lowell, Associate Editor

Newsletter is a benefit of membership.

The Mercer Museum and Library
& Fonthill Castle are
administered by the Bucks County
Historical Society.

2014 Winter-Spring Calendar of Events for Mercer Museum & Fonthill Castle

Exhibits at the Mercer

Step Right Up! Behind the Scenes of the Circus Big Top, 1890-1965

January 25 – March 16

Drawn from the Tegge Circus
Archives, and traveled by
ExhibitsUSA.

Exhibit: Playing Together: Games

January 25 – May 11

Step Right Up!

Programs at the Mercer Museum Special Presentation:

Hollywood Goes to the Circus

Sunday, January 26, 2 – 3:30 p.m.
\$12/\$10 members

School's Out Kids' Program:

Be a Clown!

Monday, January 27, 10 a.m. – Noon
\$8 per child

Circus Aerialist Demonstrations

Saturdays: February 2, 16 & March
2, 1–3 p.m.

Panel Presentation: The Circus - Past, Present and Future

Saturday, February 15, 1 – 2:30 p.m.
\$12/\$10/members

Circus Arts Workshop for Adults

Saturday, February 22, 2 – 3:30 p.m.
\$12/\$10 members

Circus Arts Workshop for Kids

Saturday, March 15, 2 – 3:30 p.m.
\$12/\$10 members

More Mercer Programs

Valentine's Storytelling Concert:

Love in All Shapes and Forms

Sunday, February 9, 2 – 4 p.m.
\$15/\$12 members

Foodways of Washington's Time

Monday, February 17, Noon – 4 p.m.

African-American History Month

Program: Healing African Dance

Sunday, February 23, 2 p.m.

19th Annual Dolls' Day Out

Saturday, March 8, 10:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
\$15/\$12 members

Pennsylvania German

Easter Egg Decorating

Friends of BCHS Quarterly Meeting

Monday, March 17, 12:30 p.m.
Free.

Lenape Native Americans:

Sponsored by Friends of the BCHS

Sunday, April 6, 1 p.m.

\$15/\$12 Friends of BCHS members

SAVE THE DATE...

2014 Mercer Legacy Sweepstakes

Sunday, April 27, 4 – 6 p.m.

Fonthill Castle

Purchase an entry in our 2014 Mercer
Legacy Sweepstakes and you could win
a brand new car or \$20,000 cash!

To enter, call 215-345-0210, ext. 132
or visit mercermuseum.org.



Programs at Fonthill Castle

Tower Tour for Families

Saturdays: February!

March 1 & April 5

10:30 a.m. & 11:45 a.m.

\$12 adults/\$6 youth; \$7 member adults/\$3
member youth

Mustache Monday

Monday, February 17, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.

\$1 off admission for adults/seniors who
sport a mustache.

Paint a Knightly Shield Youth Program

Monday, February 17, 1-3 p.m.

\$12 youth /\$7 member youth

Make a Pressed Tile Youth Workshop

Saturday, March 15, 10:30 a.m. -1:30 p.m.

\$25 youth/\$20 member youth

Behind the Scenes Tours

Saturday, March 29, 6:30-9 p.m.

\$15/\$12 members

www.mercermuseum.org



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Doylestown, PA 18901



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View online tours of the
castles on our website at
www.mercermuseum.org or
follow us on Facebook & Twitter.

Exhibits at the Mercer

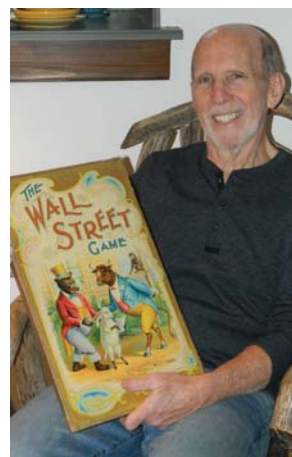


January 25-March 16



Playing
Together:
Games
January 25-
May 11

Members visit Mercer Museum & Fonthill Castle
for FREE all year long!



Bud Newman with one
of the games he loaned
to the *Playing Together:
Games* exhibit.

Happy Valentine's Day



From the collection of
Mercer Museum Library.