



MERCER MUSEUM & FONTHILL CASTLE

Summer-Fall 2013

Newsletter of the Bucks County Historical Society

Vol. 27 Number 1



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Civil War Preview Reception

More than 250 guests enjoyed the April preview reception for the Mercer's exhibit, *Turning Points:*

Civil War, 1863-1864. The exhibit commemorates the 150th anniversary of the Civil War and features many artifacts from the Mercer's collection.

Turning Points continues through August 25.



Tara Flynn of the 71st Pennsylvania Infantry



Photo by Allure West Studios

Guests view Civil War uniform



Photo by Allure West Studios

The crowd waits to enter the *Turning Points* exhibit.



Photo by Allure West Studios

Cory Amsler, Vice President of Collections and Interpretation and Curator of the *Turning Points* exhibit.



Dan and Tina Schaffer, The First National Band and Trust Company of Newtown, an exhibit sponsor



Spinning the draft wheel

Save the Date for Cocktails at the Castle

On Friday, October 11, join us as the Mercer Museum hosts our 2nd annual *Cocktails at the Castle: A Savory Exploration to Benefit the Mercer Museum*. Guests will dine on our area's finest cuisine as they wind their way through our six-story castle. You'll experience the museum's collection in a whole new way and enjoy a variety of musical entertainment. In addition, there will be opportunities to bid on unique experiences and spectacular items at Silent and Live Auctions, as well as the chance to support our Raise Your Paddle Mission Appeal. So save the date and look for your invitation this summer! For information, call Eileen Shapiro at 215-345-0210, ext. 132. ■



Mercer Museum Co-Hosted the Annual Conference of the Pennsylvania Museums



BCHS Executive Director, Doug Dolan, converses with Andrew Masich, CEO of the Heinz History Center in Pittsburgh. The Mercer Museum and the James A. Michener Art Museum co-hosted the annual conference of Pennsylvania Museums in April; our museum colleagues from across the state enjoyed all the museums of Doylestown.

Henry Mercer Visits Willow Dale Elementary School



In a "first person" program presented in May, actor C. Jameson Bradley portrayed Henry Mercer for 130 fifth graders in Warminster, Bucks County. The performance was a pilot for new outreach program to be offered by the Mercer Museum. After his performance, "Henry" answered questions, confirmed that his mustache was indeed "real," and exchanged views on history, archaeology and collecting with the students. The development of the program was made possible by a grant received from Hatboro Federal Savings Bank. ■

Mercer Rainmakers...Business Supporting History & Culture



Rick Millham, Jr., Millham Insurance Company receives his Mercer Rainmakers plaque from Laura Biersmith, Bucks County Historical Society Vice President of Development.

Mercer Rainmakers is our business member program, a vital partnership with distinguished businesses that support the organization's annual operating needs, education programs and community services. These leaders recognize the significance of our cultural richness and the importance of providing a dedicated funding stream to support the Mercer Museum and Library & Fonthill Castle.

"These extraordinary castles are part of our community fabric and they represent the quality of life we have come to enjoy and cherish here in Bucks County," stated Rick Millham Jr. "As a businessman, I know there is a direct correlation between a strong economy and a culturally vibrant community and that is why I continue to support this very special organization."

Mercer Rainmakers, formerly known as Mercer Associates, adopted the new name to reflect the Henry Mercer designed Rainmaker weather vane that soars over the Mercer Museum, at the castle's highest point. Capturing the significance and overarching presence of this architectural element, Mercer Rainmakers provide one of the most vital sources of income and ambassador support for the organization. To learn more about this exciting business partner program and to join this important group, please contact Laura Biersmith at 215-345-0210 ext. 129, via e-mail at lbiersmith@mercermuseum.org, or visit our website, mercermuseum.org. ■

Friends of the Bucks County Historical Society

Join the Friends of the BCHS for their quarterly meetings this fall. On Monday, September 16, learn the history of Castle Valley Mill, located along the Neshaminy Creek in Doylestown, Bucks County, since the early 19th century. Castle Valley Mill is once again producing the finest in stone ground flours, meals and grain mixes. Cartoonist, Thomas Nast will be the featured topic at the Friends' Meeting on Monday, November 18. Both programs begin at 12:30 p.m., followed by dessert and a short business meeting. Programs are free to the public, but donations received will be used to support future speakers. For information, call 215-345-0210, ext. 132.

Business + Taxes = Mercer Museum Education Programs

Did you know your business may be able to designate its taxes as contributions benefitting Mercer Museum education programs? It's true! Pennsylvania's Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) Program allows eligible businesses to donate funds to the Mercer Museum's National History Day and Museum Apprentice Program and in return deduct 75% to 90% of the donation as a credit applied to the state taxes owed by the business. As an approved Educational Improvement Organization (EIO), the Mercer Museum can receive contributions from eligible EITC businesses. Entities eligible to apply for EITC are operating businesses authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania that are subject to one or more of the following taxes: Corporate Net Income Tax, Capital Stock Franchise Tax, Bank and Trust Company Shares Tax, Title Insurance Companies Shares Tax, Insurance Premiums Tax, or Mutual Thrift Institutions Tax. Businesses apply for the tax credits by submitting an online application with the



L to R: Thomas Frascella, Kreischer Miller and Joseph Giedgowd, Byers' Choice Ltd., were panelists with Joseph Tryon at the EITC seminar held at the Mercer Museum in March.

state, and the credits are awarded via a computer-generated lottery system.

"We have been an EITC business participant for years," stated Hatboro Federal Savings President Joseph Tryon. "This valuable program allows us to support innovative education initiatives, which offer our local school students enhanced classroom learning."

To learn more about this unique program, please call Laura Biersmith, VP of Development at 215-345-0210 ext. 129. ■

Coverlets Among Recent Museum Acquisitions

We are indebted to Mary Jane Clemens for adding two important items to the Mercer Museum's extensive coverlet collection. The first of these two Jacquard-woven spreads, dating from 1840, was produced by Bucks County weaver John Kaufman of Hilltown Township. Kaufman, a prolific craftsman who may have produced as many as 500 coverlets, worked from about 1837 to 1850. Most of his coverlets are signed and dated, and many identify the individual for whom the piece was made. He produced this particular coverlet for Anna Hockman.

Kaufman was born in 1812 in Lehigh County. His father died when he was just ten years old, and it is likely that he served an apprenticeship with another weaver. At some point in the 1830s, he relocated to Hilltown, Bucks County, and began his own weaving business. Single when he first started weaving coverlets, Kaufman married Susanna Anglemoyer of Hilltown in 1839. The couple had at least five children, some who died in infancy.

Woven on relatively narrow looms – typical of the time – Kaufman's coverlets were produced in two pieces, sewn together at the middle to provide the appropriate width. The complex patterns were made possible using a series of punched cards and a mechanism (the "Jacquard head") that "read" the holes in the cards in order to raise and lower certain warp threads for each throw of the weaver's shuttle.

John Kaufman died on March 24, 1863. At the time of his death, he was still in possession of a loom, and the inventory of his estate references other items in his "shop." Kaufman is buried in the graveyard at Blooming Glen Mennonite Meetinghouse in Hilltown.

In addition to the Kaufman coverlet, the donor also contributed a centennial spread to the Museum's collection. Woven in 1876, also using the Jacquard process, the coverlet includes the Pennsylvania motto of "Virtue, Liberty and Independence," and features a domed building – probably one of the structures from the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia.

Other items donated to the Mercer Museum in 2013 include three show tow-



COVERLET FOR ANNA HOCKMAN (DETAIL). John Kaufman, Hilltown Township, Bucks County, 1840. Gift of Mary Jane Clemens, 2013.

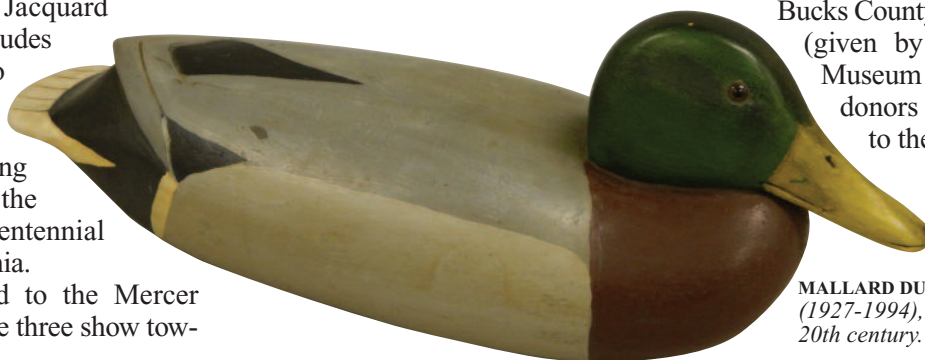


"ROAST DINNERS" SIGN FROM THE RED LION INN. Quakertown, Bucks County, c. 1925. Gift of David B. Long, 2013.

els (given by Susan Wetherill); a t-shirt given to a worker at the U.S. Steel Plant, Fairless Works, c. 1980 (given by Paul

Rhoads); and a carved duck decoy, medicine bottles, hotel sign, and other items documenting 19th and 20th-century

Bucks County crafts and manufactures (given by David B. Long). The Museum is grateful to all of these donors for their thoughtful gifts to the collections. ■



MALLARD DUCK DECOY. Nick Sacchi (1927-1994), Bristol, Bucks County, late 20th century. Gift of David B. Long, 2013.



MERCER MUSEUM HOLIDAY EXHIBIT.
*Watch for this year's edition of our annual Christmas-time exhibit, **Under the Tree: A Century of Holiday Trees and Toys**, opening November 23 and running through January 4, 2014.*

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 artifacts at the following institutions:

Washington Crossing Historic Park, Washington Crossing, PA

Inaugural Exhibit for the Grand Re-Opening of the Visitor Center,
 March 2013 – March 2014

This exhibit and historic site interprets the story of how General George Washington planned and executed his daring crossing of the Delaware River on December 25, 1776, leading to victory in the Battle of Trenton and turning the tide of the Revolutionary War. The Mercer Museum is proud to lend Edward Hicks' "Washington at the Delaware" Toll Bridge sign to this exhibit. This sign had originally hung on the Bucks County side of a bridge spanning the River at Taylorsville, now Washington Crossing.

National Constitution Center, Philadelphia, PA

"The Story of We, the People," July 2013 – July 2014

We are pleased that once again we are able to share our unique Bucks County artifacts in the National Constitution Center's core exhibit "The Story of We, the People." Loaned objects include a feedbag converted into a pillowcase during the Great Depression (1929) and a Ku Klux Klan Robe and Hood (ca. 1920).

For more information on these two artifacts, please visit our on-line catalog RolloPAC and search accession numbers 000292, MM2006.13.001.A-B, and MM2000.08.028 ■

Mercer Museum Centennial



MERCER MUSEUM UNDER CONSTRUCTION, C. 1914. *Beginning this year, and running through 2016, the Mercer Museum is celebrating the centennial anniversary of its construction. The image, taken by local photographer Geneva Clay of the Clay Studio, Doylestown, is from Henry Mercer's construction notebook. Mercer Library Collection.*

While the Mercer Museum has been occupied with commemorating the 150th anniversary of the Civil War (with the opening of the exhibition, *Turning Points: Civil War, 1863-1864*), there is another anniversary which we must acknowledge as well. One hundred years ago this year, Henry Mercer began building the concrete castle that we know today as the Mercer Museum.

At an April 10, 1913 meeting of the Board of Directors of the Bucks County Historical Society, Mercer formally pre-

sented his proposal for a new museum building, eighty by forty-five feet in dimension. According to meeting minutes, Mercer "proposed to erect the building at his own expense, to equip and maintain the building during life, and finally to provide an endowment sufficient to maintain the building and pay the salary of a skilled curator." The one condition that Mercer placed on his offer was that the Historical Society had to guarantee that it would never sell or otherwise dispose of any of the land for building by "outside interests."

Of course by 1913, the Historical Society had long since acquired the property, and had erected the brick Elkins Building to serve as its home. The original log house had also been relocated to the property from the north end of the Borough. But with Mercer's aggressive collecting, the Society had outgrown the Elkins Building. If Mercer was to transfer more of his artifacts to the Society's care, he wanted a fireproof structure in which to house them. Following Mercer's presentation, the BCHS Board agreed unanimously to

Mercer Green Elements Showcased

The Bucks County Historical Society partnered with the Bucks County Conservation District (BCCD) and the Borough of Doylestown in developing an educational program to raise community awareness of stormwater best management practices. The program was funded by an education grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection to the BCCD. The museum is indebted to Mary Ellen Noonan of the BCCD for spearheading this effort. The Mercer Museum's expansion included a rain garden, a green roof and porous pavement parking area which were installed to manage stormwater and reduce non-point source pollution. The educational program of BCCD included the development of brochures explaining stormwater practices along with all-weather permanent signage around the grounds of the museum. The signs were unveiled in June and will inform neighbors and visitors for years to come. In conjunction with the conservation signs, the museum installed an informational sign detailing the museum's own history.



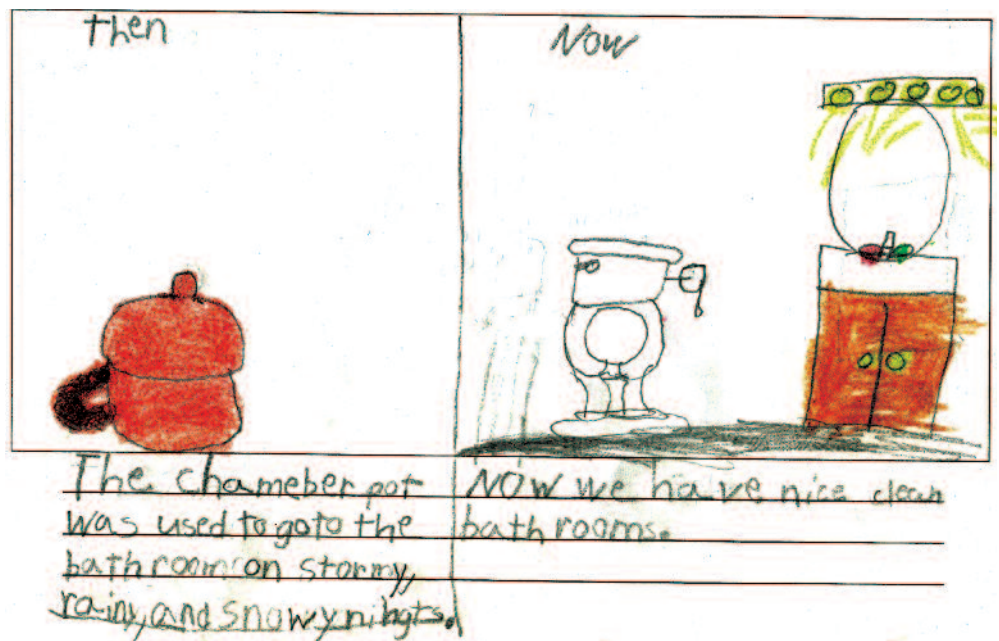
The outdoor sign explaining the green roof of the Mercer Museum. The museum's roof holds a variety of sedums which can tolerate harsh weather conditions.

accept his proposal, and gave him “carte blanche” to make any alterations in the plans that he deemed necessary.

Though some contractual formalities would not be fully worked out until a November 1913 Board meeting, Mercer did not wait to get the project started. According to his “Notebook of the First Plans for the New Museum of the Historical Society of Bucks County,” construction began shortly after the April meeting and was in high gear by summertime. During the summer, the foundation was dug and the walls formed, and work was underway on the first floor. Mercer notes that after finishing construction of his garage at Fonthill, he brought over the gasoline-powered concrete mixer he had recently acquired. The new museum's concrete foundation had been entirely hand-mixed, but the machine would now be put to work for the remainder of the project.

The project would take nearly three years to complete, but by June 17, 1916 the building was readied for opening. On that date was scheduled an “Entertainment and Dance,” the invitation to which is pasted inside Mercer's construction notebook. Future issues of this newsletter will chronicle the building's progress between 1914 and 1916. ■

Think about our trip to Mercer Museum. Draw and color a picture of something that people from the 1700s and 1800s did differently than we do now. Then write a caption under the picture to describe what the picture shows



Drawing by a first grader from Linden Elementary School in Doylestown.

MEMORIES OF THE CIRCUS



CIRCUS AT TAYLOR'S FIELD. *The circus comes to Doylestown in this c. 1890s view of what would later become the site of the Mercer Museum. Mercer Library Collection.*

On January 28, 2014, the Mercer Museum will open the traveling exhibition, *Step Right Up! Behind the Scenes of the Circus Big Top, 1890-1965*. The exhibit 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.

It is entirely appropriate that the Mercer Museum should host this exhibition. After all, the location of the Museum – built upon the expanse of land once known locally as “Taylor’s Field” – was at one time the site for many circuses that visited Doylestown. One photograph, taken probably in the 1890s, shows circus tents and banners erected on the field. The focal point is the “Big Top,” the large tent in which the main show was presented. The Bucks County Prison (now the Michener Art Museum) is visible in the background.

But visits from traveling circuses date back much further than the 1890s in Doylestown and other Bucks County communities. Advertisements in local papers describe circuses arriving in Doylestown as early as the 1840s.

These circuses invariably made grand entrances into town in the form of parades – a way to build interest, mystery and excitement, and encourage locals to pay to see the shows that would follow once tents were erected and performers ready to entertain.

In May 1843, for example, “Herr Driesbach” brought his menagerie of “beasts and birds” to town. Highlights



KING BROTHERS CIRCUS POSTER, c. 1960s. *Mercer Library Collection.*



CLOWN SHOES. *One of the circus artifacts on view in the exhibit, “Step Right Up!” Courtesy of the Tegge Circus Archives Collection.*

of his entourage’s entry into Doylestown included a bandwagon pulled by four elephants, and Driesbach himself

driving a chariot with a “Wild Lion” in harness. The year 1851 saw the first appearance of P.T. Barnum’s “American Museum and Menagerie” in town, which included his “museum of wonders” and the famed dwarf, or little person, “Tom Thumb” (real name: Charles Stratton). But perhaps the very earliest event that could be deemed a circus was the arrival of a “living elephant” in Doylestown in April 1813. Such early exotic spectacles were the genesis of what would later become the full-fledged circus.

As we prepare to host the traveling exhibit, the Mercer Museum invites our members, and others, to share with us stories, pictures or other memorabilia associated with circuses past – particularly those appearing in Bucks County and the nearby Delaware Valley. The circus was once a thrilling and exotic spectacle that burst into towns along America’s roads and railways. Many may yet remember the arrival of the rail cars and trucks packed with canvas, exotic animal menageries, strongmen, fat ladies and roustabouts that brought entertainment to local communities earlier in the 20th century. If you have a local circus memory, or artifacts or images to share, please contact the curatorial department at 215-345-0210 ext 127, or e-mail camsler@mercermuseum.org.

The Annual Fund...Every Year Making A Difference

It is one of those tried and true fundraising initiatives—a special appeal we send to our family of members, donors and friends to request support for the very core of our mission. And we send it every year because it makes a tremendous difference and provides an important stream of support.

Annual Fund gifts are vital to the health and continued growth of the Bucks County Historical Society. Donations to our Annual Fund campaign support the care and preservation of our cherished National Historic Landmark museums and collections. The Annual Fund also benefits our exhibitions, educational programs, summer camps, classes, and our visitor services. In 2012, more than 250 donors contributed over \$80,000 to the Annual Fund Campaign and with those dollars we were able to:

- Welcome more than 90,000 visitors to the Mercer Museum and

Library & Fonthill Castle.

- Present five major exhibitions—three were traveling exhibits.
- Acquire 81 historical artifacts for the collection.
- Accession into the Library 600 historical documents.
- Organize our region's National History Day, involving 500+ middle and high school students.
- Host over 300 education programs at Mercer Museum & Fonthill Castle, attracting more than 7,000 participants including schoolchildren, scout troops and camp groups.

"It's a very important fundraising program and we are committed to expanding our efforts this year through our summer and early fall annual fund mailings," stated Tom Thomas, Chair of the Development Committee. "We launched our 2013 campaign earlier this year to

secure initial commitments from our board of trustees. With the help of Co-Chair Grover Friend, we've implemented a new approach that we hope will result in increased giving," added Thomas.

If you have already contributed to our 2013 Campaign, thank you for being a vital part of everything we do to advance our mission and support our valuable programs and services. If you are planning to support our efforts through our summer and early fall Annual Fund mailings, please remember that your gift has an immediate and significant impact on our organization's ability to educate and inspire. In addition to enhancing the educational experiences of the Mercer Museum & Fonthill Castle, your gift, in any amount, will also motivate others to share your enthusiasm for BCHS and join our family of donors.

For more information or to donate, please contact Laura Biersmith, VP of Development at 215-345-0210, ext. 129. ■

Taste the Local Culture!



The 2013 Brewery Night event will take place at Fonthill Castle on Friday, August 16, from 7-10 p.m. The theme of the evening is "eat and drink local." All breweries participating in this beer sampling event are located in Bucks County or from surrounding counties. There will be a number of local farms, food co-ops and other food-related establishments providing

samples of their cheeses, fruits, vegetables and other locally grown delights. Mert and Monte's of Doylestown will be providing the light fare for the evening. Many of the ingredients used by Mert and Monte's are acquired right in the neighborhood! Tickets: \$35/\$28 for members.

So be sure to purchase your tickets to this wildly popular event – and evening to celebrate a key part of our local culture! Call 215-348-9461 for tickets or more information.

Stories Under the Trees



Folklorist, musician and storyteller, Darcy Fair, returns this summer for more lunch-time stories and songs on the Mercer grounds. See calendar for dates and times for remainder of the summer. This year's programs are supported by the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, a state agency, through its regional arts funding partnership, Pennsylvania Partners in the Arts (PPA).

We Are Very Grateful to All of Our

Henry Chapman Mercer Society (\$2,500 and above)

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Preserve History...for Future Generations

Just by including The Bucks County Historical Society (BCHS) in your estate plans,
you can help preserve history for generations to come!

**A bequest is a simple way to support the BCHS in the future while retaining control
of your assets during your lifetime.** We can be named as a beneficiary
of your will, trust, retirement plan, life insurance policy or financial accounts.
Preserving our past for the future...it's history in the making.

For more information about making a bequest to the Bucks County Historical Society, please contact
Laura Biersmith at 215-345-0210 ext. 129 or via e-mail, lbiersmith@mercermuseum.org.



**MERCER
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The BCHS cannot render tax or legal advice. Please consult your professional financial advisor before making a charitable gift.



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Upcoming Exhibit

An archeological team has mysteriously disappeared from a dig site in Palenque, Mexico! They had been investigating a long-standing rumor that a priceless jade medallion is buried in the temple there. However, something horrifying has scared them off. Luckily, in their haste to escape, they managed to leave behind a video with clues and a warning to all who come after. Now, young archeologists must uncover the mystery of the dig site and find the priceless treasure. *Mystery of the Mayan Medallion*, a traveling exhibit opening at the Mercer Museum on September 21, invites families and school groups to learn more about the sophisticated Maya civilization through a series of discovery-oriented interactive stations – all set within an engaging and curiosity-driven environment.

The Maya, of course, are no stranger to the Mercer Museum. Museum founder, Henry Mercer was fascinated with the native peoples of the New World, and with the archaeological record they left behind. In 1895, he led an expedition to Mayan sites in the Yucatan in search of evidence of early human habitation in the region – an expedition that resulted in his book, *The Hill-caves of Yucatan*. The book serves both as an archaeological exploration of cave sites, as well as a travelogue in which Mercer vividly describes the people and places he encountered.

While he did not find all that he was



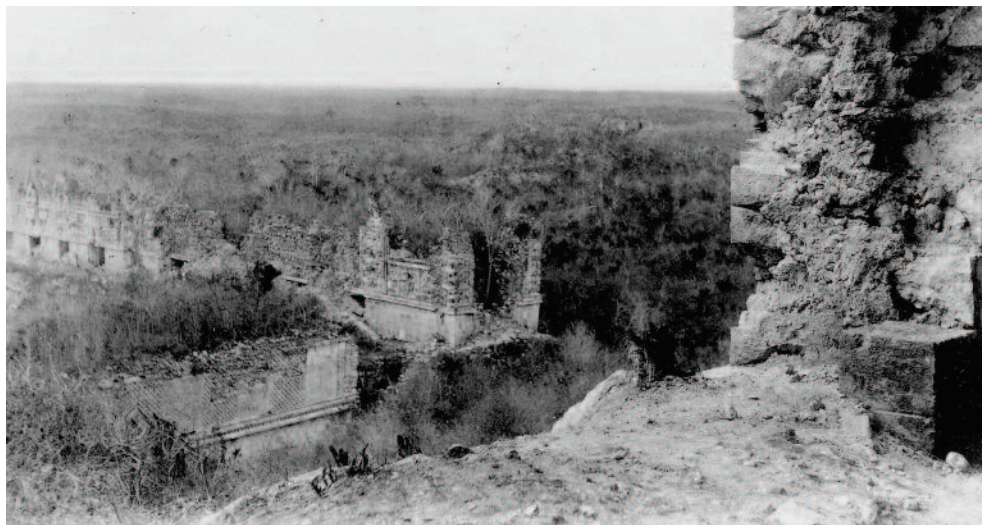
seeking archaeologically, the trip captured Mercer's imagination and had an impact on his later tile-making and architecture. His 1895 sketch of a building in the Yucatan ultimately influenced the design of his Moravian Pottery and Tile Works some twenty years later. His interest in the *kabal*, a sort of primitive potter's wheel with roots in ancient Mayan civilization, spawned an article by Mercer on the device and stimulated his interest in clay-working traditions. The tool also appeared in one of Mercer's tiles, as did other

references to both Mayan and Aztec culture.

The Mercer Museum will supplement *Mystery of the Mayan Medallion* with images from Henry Mercer's expedition to the Yucatan, and with a few artifacts related to his investigative archaeology. But the main portion of the exhibit – the traveling portion – will be highly immersive and interactive.

Visitors will translate glyphs, discover which rainforest animals are poisonous, learn how the Mayans recorded dates, make rubbings from a sarcophagus, and interpret a "battle" mural. Exhibit components include archeology, biology and astro-mathematics field stations, an observatory and a tomb. The show is particularly targeted toward youth in the upper elementary and middle school age groups. It will be on view at Mercer through January 12, 2014.

Mystery of the Mayan Medallion has been developed by the Arkansas Discovery Network, a statewide museum partnership operated by the Museum of Discovery, Little Rock, Arkansas. The Arkansas Discovery Network was established through a grant from the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation. The Mercer Museum is delighted to be able to bring this imaginative, entertaining and educational exhibit to Bucks County and the Delaware Valley. ■



VIEW FROM THE DWARF'S HOUSE, UXMAL, YUCATAN. Henry C. Mercer, 1895. The so-called "Dwarf's House," better known as the "Pyramid of the Magician," is the tallest structure in the ancient Mayan city of Uxmal, visited by Mercer during his Yucatan expedition.



HANDS-ON ACTIVITY STATION, MYSTERY OF THE MAYAN MEDALLION. Visitors to the exhibit examine clues to solve the disappearance of an archaeological team. Courtesy of the Arkansas Discovery Network.

George Grant Kelly: A Colorful Life

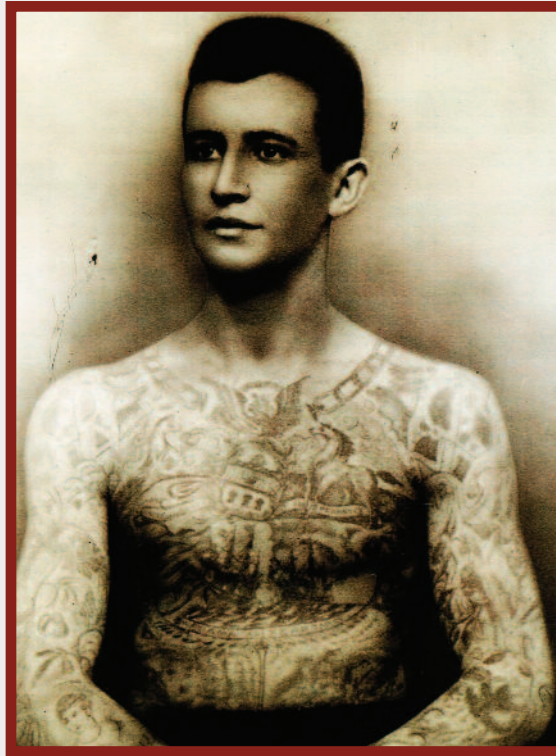
By Norah Kelly (Mercer Museum Library Researcher)

My grandfather, George Grant Kelly, was born in 1869 and grew up in Doylestown. His was a colorful life. According to family legend, he was “thrown out of town” for getting into a “rock fight.” He then joined a large traveling circus, became a Tattooed Man, and adopted the stage name “Karlavagn.” After he retired, around the turn of the century, he opened a hotel in Philadelphia which catered to theatrical performers and operated during the height of the Vaudeville/Burlesque era. Family stories from that era include tales of a baby Mickey Rooney sleeping in a bureau drawer and of future silent film comedian, Buster Keaton working as the night clerk.

Not long ago, I received a phone call from the curator of a Pittsburgh museum who was looking for more information about my grandfather. They were planning an exhibition on “The History of Tattooing in America,” and, as it turns out, “Karlavagn” was very well known in the side-show world of the late 1800s. They were hoping to feature him as an example of a tattooed man who found success after the circus, and I was thrilled to start doing more research into the facts behind the legends.

After finding considerable 20th century material on my grandfather through Philadelphia Archive files on his hotel, I began to focus on his earlier life. I knew that he had grown up in Bucks County, and I thought I would see if I could track down his parents and other relatives.

My search for information led me to the library of the Bucks County Historical Society at the Mercer Museum. I drove out to the library with my daughter, and we met with Carol Jones, Donna Humphrey, and Sara Good. With their help, we dug into the archives, and we couldn’t believe how much we discovered! Almost immediately, we located various marriage announcements, gravestone catalog entries, and church records. Each new bit of information was more exciting than the last. We even saw an original receipt for my great-



George Grant Kelly, c. 1891-1895.

grandfather’s \$2 tuition at a seminary in 1850, when he was twelve years old. This tuition note helped to lead us to more surprising discoveries regarding both my great-grandfather and my grandfather.

We had long had our suspicions that my great-grandfather, William H. Kelly, had been a soldier during the Civil War. He was the right age at the time, he had given his son (my grandfather) the probably significant middle name of Grant, and we thought that perhaps the antique family quilt, made by his sister and dated from 1863, might have been a token of comfort from home for a young man at war.

After searching through the library’s copy of Samuel Bates’ *History of the Pennsylvania Volunteers, 1861-5*, we were able to exclude many William H. and William Kellys from the possibility of being my relative. They provided location, dates of enlistment and deaths during the Civil War. Finally, after eliminating various Williams who died, were too old, or came from the wrong area of the state, we hit pay dirt. We found the record of William H. Kelly from Doylestown in the

roster of the 122nd Pennsylvania Volunteers, a unit which served with the Army of the Potomac and fought at Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville! Then we discovered another exciting piece of information, and our suspicions that this was our William H. were confirmed. While searching through articles from the *Doylestown Intelligencer* newspaper, which is part of the library’s catalogue, we read the story of “The Fracas in New Hope.” This amazing clipping describes how my great-grandfather was involved in an altercation with a man described as a “desperate individual.” Said “desperate individual” had accused William H. of throwing rocks at him, and threatened him with a shotgun and a pistol! Here, it seemed was the original “rock fight.” Fortunately, William was able to disarm the man and throw his weapons into a canal. The man later accosted William at his home and stabbed him in the shoulder with a screwdriver-

type implement. (William disarmed him *again*, and the man was arrested and imprisoned.) William survived with only minor injuries -but enough to keep him out of the army while he recovered. Imagine how delighted we were to find that the records of the William H. we’d found showed a leave of absence which coincided with the aftermath of the “Fracas.”

The story of the “Fracas” was also interesting in that it suggested that my grandfather had not actually been in a rock fight *himself*. We have been told that circus people often embellish their histories to appear as sensational characters, and the “Fracas” is nothing if not sensational. It seems that my grandfather had not looked far when he had been searching for a tall tale to liven up his background.

I cannot say enough about how helpful the staff at the library were. Donna, Carol, and Sara were extremely helpful in navigating the enormous collection. Please do yourself a favor and make an appointment to go and see them. You may not find a rock fight in *your* family history, but there will almost definitely be something of interest! ■

Regional History Day a Success!

The Regional History Day Competition for Bucks and Montgomery Counties took place at Ursinus College on March 23, 2013. Congratulations to all student participants! To view a list of this year's winners, please visit: <http://www.mercermuseum.org/learn-and-do/national-history-day/>.

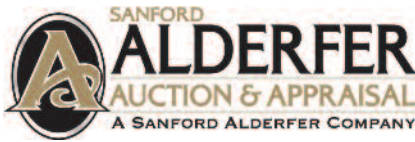


Emily Rehmet & Matthew Gorman, Unami Middle School, Second Place Winners, Senior Group Exhibit, Levittown



Anna Gamarnik, Central Bucks South High School, Second Place Winner, Senior Individual Documentary, G.I. Bill: The Rise of the Middle Class

History Day was generously supported by: Volpe and Koenig P.C., Intellectual Property Law, Mercer Museum & Fonthill Castle/Bucks County Historical Society and Ursinus College.



Civil War Appraisal Day!

The Mercer Museum is proud to partner once again with Alderfer Auction & Appraisal Company for our annual Appraisal Day program. Bring your Civil War heirlooms or battlefield relics to the Mercer Museum on Saturday, August 10, from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. Experts will provide verbal appraisals and historical contexts for your treasures. A fun and educational experience! After your appraisal, enjoy exploring the museum's exhibit *Turning Points: Civil War 1863-1864*.

Please call 215-348-9461 for more information. \$15 per item, limit of 5 items (\$12 for Museum members). Program benefits Mercer Museum collecting and conservation initiatives. ■

Genealogy Workshop:

Researching Your Civil War Ancestor

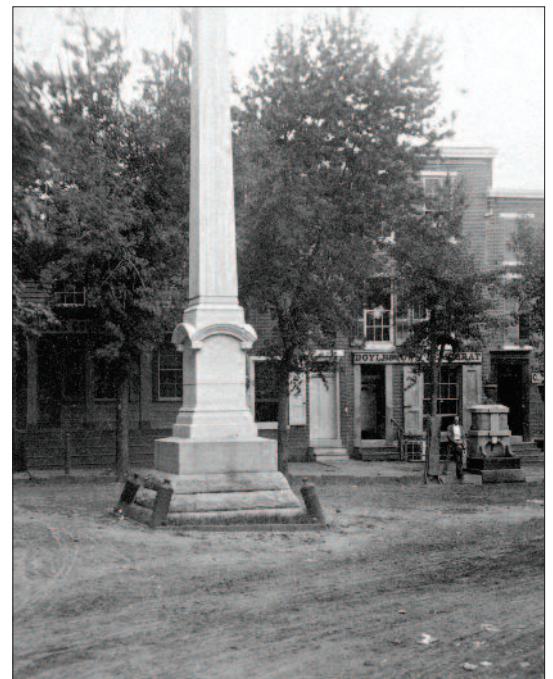
The Mercer Museum welcomes professional genealogist, Laura Congleton, for her presentation “Researching Your Civil War Ancestors,”



on Sunday July 28 from 1– 4 p.m. With over 30 years of experience researching family history and Civil War records, she will share her knowledge of how to identify and research Civil War veterans (Union and Confederate) using records available online and at local repositories. The program will focus on the use of federal, state, and family records, and how to avoid common pitfalls. Mercer Museum staff will also present an overview of the records within the museum's Library & Archives and how these records just might solve your genealogical puzzle! Call 215-348-9461 to register. ■

Doylestown's Civil War Walking Tour

The Civil War conjures up images of battles, generals, and soldiers; however, this war touched just about everyone who lived in the United States at that time. Whether it was wives who watched their husbands march off to war, or children who waited for their fathers to come home, the Civil War left its mark on communities everywhere, including Doylestown. On Friday, August 23, take a step back in time and enjoy an evening stroll through Doylestown's Civil War Era history on a walking tour of local sites and treasures. There are two tour times available, 5:30 and 7 p.m. Tours are approximately 1-hour in duration and begin at the Mercer Museum. Adults: \$11/\$9 members, Children (6-12): \$6/\$4 members. Call 215-348-9461 to make your reservation. ■



Doylestown's Civil War monument and “Newspaper Row” on East Court Street

No Bones About it: Rediscovered Skulls at Fonthill

Usually, people prefer to keep their skeletons in the closet. But then, Henry Mercer is not someone that most people would consider usual. Recently, while Fonthill volunteer and guide, Vance Koehler was cleaning artifacts in the Study of Fonthill, he made an interesting rediscovery. High on a shelf to the left of the Study fireplace, there are two cranial looking objects. Guides and visitors have frequently wondered if these two objects were more skulls like the one resting on the mantel. When Mr. Koehler brought the objects down for a thorough dusting and cleaning, we finally were able to provide an answer to that question.

The two objects are skulls, sort of. Thanks to a label still attached to the interior of one of the “skulls” we now know that they are plaster casts of the calvarium (skull cap) and brain cast (interior of the skull) of a Neanderthal! According to the one remaining label, these plaster casts were made by the Charles H. Ward, Anatomical Laboratory in Rochester, New York. Charles H. Ward established his



Plaster skulls collected by Henry Mercer, c. 1905.

business in 1899 and ran it until his death in 1943. Ward's company sold reproductions of the bones of prehistoric man to universities and museums across the country, including The Peabody Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography and the University of Pennsylvania. Henry Mercer had ties to both of these institutions.

While we have finally answered one question (what are those things up on that shelf?) it does raise other ones. When did Mercer purchase or receive the casts? If he purchased them, why did he do it after he had left the field of archaeology? The earliest these cast were produced was two years after Henry resigned from the University Museum. We know Mercer was interested in Paleolithic peoples in the North America and Europe, were these casts meant for a broader study of that time period worldwide or just as a delightful curiosity to display? To discover those answers will require more research. But is that not always the way of history? And now we know that Henry Mercer kept his skeletons on a shelf in plain sight! ■

Vicksburg Memorial

**By Vance Koehler
Fonthill Staff and Volunteer**

In 1905, Henry Mercer entered this plaster architectural model in an open competition held for the design of the Pennsylvania memorial, to be built on the site of the Vicksburg Battlefield in Mississippi. Sponsored by the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, the selection jury reviewed 92 designs submitted by 74 competitors. Mercer's entry consisted of a freestanding arch to be constructed of red brick and inset with large mosaics depicting soldiers, Civil War battle scenes, and the arms of Pennsylvania and Mississippi. Mercer did not win the commission – Albert Randolph Ross was selected – but this may be the first instance in which he thought of himself as a professional architect. ■



This plaster model which was stored in the basement of Fonthill, will be on display in Fonthill's Saloon until the Turning Points exhibit closes.

Martin & Mercer: Masters of the Molded Masonry

By Kathryn Ann Auerbach, Preservation Consultant & Member, BCHS Collections Committee

To sit in the Map Room and Newspaper room of the Mercer Library is to benefit from the best of both worlds, the presence of Henry Mercer through the adjoining Mercer Museum and the sensitive reinforced concrete library addition designed by A. Oscar Martin. To view Martin's original drawings in this space illuminated by his large windows, is even more exceptional. Martin & Mercer were contemporaries and visionaries, daring to explore the possibilities of reinforced concrete while encapsulating the products in the familiar language of recognized architectural design.

Blending new engineering and materials into a traditional community and setting is a challenge to the best of architects and engineers even today, but seemed almost effortless to these Masters of the Molded Masonry. In fact, Adam Oscar Martin may have preceded Mercer in his successful utilization of concrete, and for public projects, since some of his earliest concrete designs are from 1906. The Martin collection of drawings not only chronicles Martin's exceptional output of building designs for homes, firehouses, schools, factories, borough halls & more; it contains perhaps the most comprehensive record of early 20th century bridge design in the country.

Martin, like Mercer, transitioned out of the Victorian era into the Modern age gracefully, bringing the best elements of style sensibility to molded forms in a new material. While serving as County commissioner in 1900, Martin designed a stone arch bridge in Nockamixon township. Within several years (after his tenure as commissioner was over), Martin's output of bridge

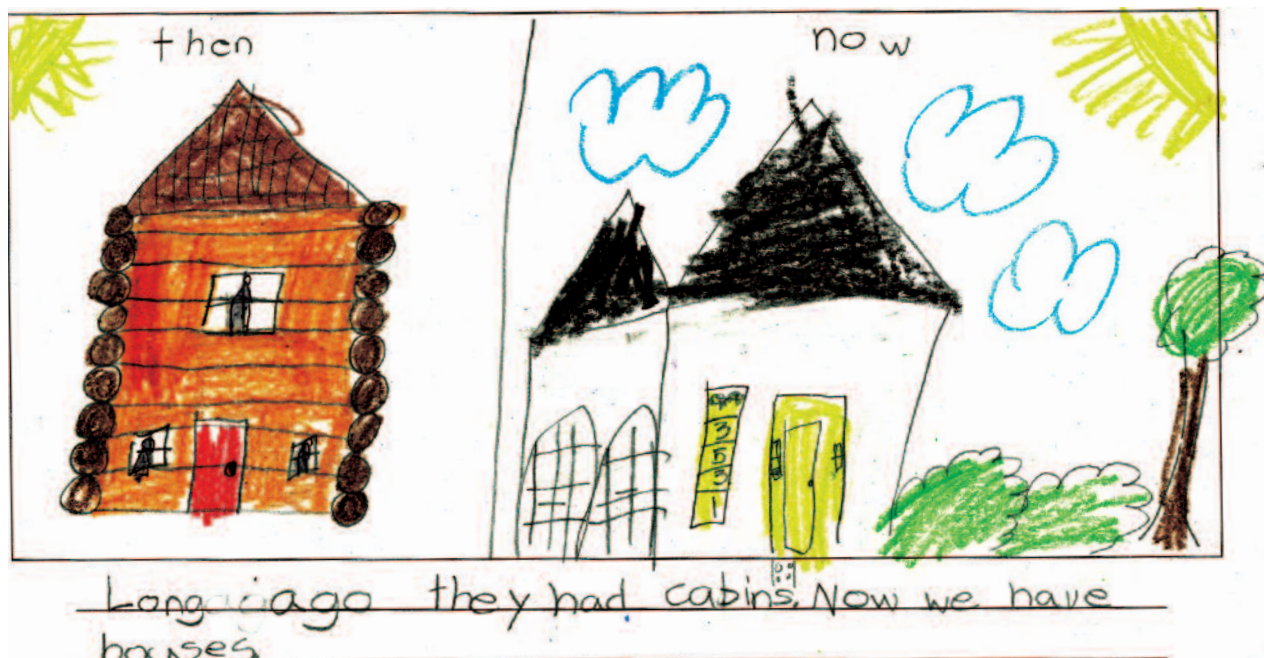


A. Oscar Martin, Architect
(1873-1942), from *Pennsylvania,
A History*, 1926.

designs, repairs to covered, wooden and stone arch bridges, increased, and by 1906, he began producing concrete bridges for the county. While quickly disappearing, a number of these bridges still exist in rural areas of Upper Bucks County and have been recognized in national engineering journals for their exceptional ingenuity. By 1914, the *Trenton Times* was reporting that Martin had convinced the county that concrete was a viable material for bridge construction, either for "repairs" utilizing existing abutments or entirely new spans. He designed well over 100 bridges throughout the county & beyond its borders, with the large 1921 barrel arched span over the Tohickon Creek in Point Pleasant, one of his last. He was succeeded in the newly created position of County Engineer by John S. Roberts, whose drawings unfortunately no longer exist.

The collection of Martin drawings are remarkable in their state of preservation. The large original ink on vellum drawings contain notations, calculations, erasures, comments about the previous bridges & stream characteristics. They provide the X-ray vision inside these marvelous concrete structures to understand their construction and load capabilities. Any effort to provide a comprehensive index and careful preservation of these priceless records will aid those involved with the repair and preservation of Bucks County's unique and nationally significant collection of Martin bridges. Digital scans of the drawings can facilitate the value, usage and appreciation of this collection. The Martin collection gives us a view inside his mind, and a view back into this early 20th century world, even as he was viewing and designing for the future. ■

Think about our trip to Mercer Museum. Draw and color a picture of something that people from the 1700s and 1800s did differently than we do now. Then write a caption under the picture to describe what the picture shows



Drawing by a first grader from Linden Elementary School in Doylestown.

Table with a Tale

Do you remember telling your toddler not to write on the furniture? Or perhaps you were the one being told not to write on a piece of furniture. It seems, however, that Henry Mercer never learned that lesson very well.

On the inside of a table frame in the Study of Fonthill, there is a message. Written in pencil, in Mercer's handwriting, is the following note...

Legs — from porch at Oakland

Top — pew seats in First Baptist Church

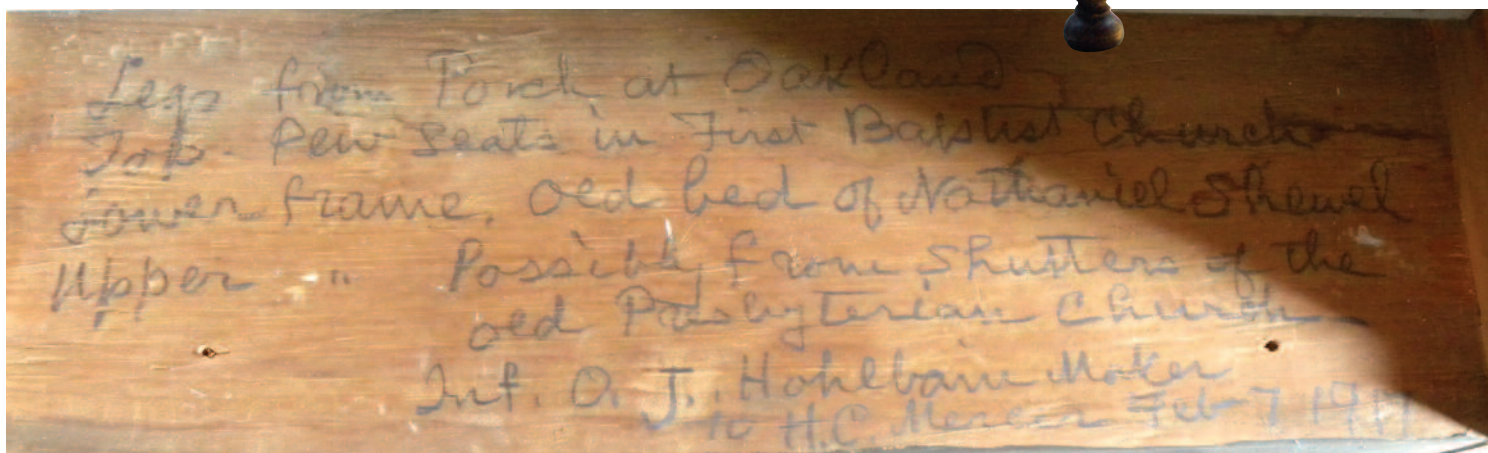
Lower frame — Old bed of Nathaniel Shewel

Upper — possibly from shutters of the old Presbyterian Church Inf. O.J. Hohlbaum Maker to H.C. Mercer Feb 7 1917

While this method of documenting the provenance of an object might not be up to current collections standards, perhaps it should not surprise us that Mercer combined the history of this hand-made table with the object itself. At least, he could be sure that the story would not become misfiled and lost!



Fonthill's Study by Nic Barlow.



2013 Partial Summer – Fall Calendar of Events for Mercer Museum & Fonthill Castle

Camps at the Castles

Medieval Camp

Monday-Friday
July 29-August 2
9 am-Noon
Fonthill Castle
\$225/\$200 members

LEGO™ Robotics Workshop – Advanced II NXT

Monday-Friday, August 5-9
8:30 -11:30 a.m.
Mercer Museum
\$165/\$145 Members

LEGO™ Robotics Workshop – Intermediate

Monday-Friday, August 5-9
12:30-3:30 p.m.
Mercer Museum
\$165/\$145 members

LEGO™ Robotics Workshop – Advanced III NXT – QUEST

Monday-Friday, August 19-23
8:30-11:30 am
Mercer Museum
\$165/\$145 members

LEGO™ Robotics Workshop – Basics

Monday-Friday, August 19-23
12:30-3:30 p.m.
Mercer Museum
\$165/145 members

Programs at Mercer

Stories Under the Trees with Darcy Fair

August 13 & 27
Noon – 1 p.m.
Mercer Museum Grounds
Free

Turning Points Lecture Series: Dark Tales – Civil War Prisons and Prisoners

Sunday, July 21, 2 pm
Putman Learning Center
\$12/Free to members

Genealogy Workshop: Researching Your Civil War Ancestor

Sunday, July 28, 1-4 p.m.
Putman Learning Center
\$20/\$15 members

Turning Points Lecture Series: Gettysburg – Aftermath and Commemoration

Sunday, August 4, 2 p.m.
Putman Learning Center
\$12/Free to members

Civil War Appraisal Day

Saturday, August 10, 10-2 p.m.
Putman Learning Center
\$15 each item/\$12 members
(up to five items)

Civil War Doylestown Walking Tour

Friday, August 23, 5:30 p.m. & 7 p.m.
Adults: \$8/\$6 members
Children (6-12): \$5/\$3 members

Friends of the BCHS Meeting: Castle Valley Mill

Monday, September 16
12:30 p.m.

Cocktails at the Castle

Friday, October 11
6:30-10:30 p.m.

Mercer by Moonlight Tours

Friday, October 25
7 p.m. & 8 p.m.

Friends of the BCHS Meeting: Thomas Nast

Monday, November 18
12:30 p.m.

Holiday Open House

Tuesday, December 10
7-9 p.m., FREE

Exhibits at the Mercer

Turning Points: Civil War, 1863-1864

Through August 25
Sydney and Sharon Martin Gallery

Mystery of the Mayan Medallion

September 21 – January 12, 2014
Sydney and Sharon Martin Gallery

Under the Tree: A Century of Holiday Trees and Toys

November 23 – January 4, 2014

Programs at Fonthill Castle

Tower Tours for Families

Saturday, August 3, Sept. 7
Oct. 5, Nov. 2, Dec., 7
10:30 a.m. and 11:45 a.m.
\$12 adults/\$6 youth; \$7 member
adults/\$3 member youth

Annual Beer Event: Eat and Drink Local

Friday, August 16
7-10 p.m.
\$35/\$28 members

Fonthill Park Walk

Saturday, September 28, 1 p.m.
\$15 adults/\$7 youth; \$8 member
adults/\$4 member youth

Behind the Scenes Tours

Saturday, October 26 & November 2
6:30-9 p.m.
\$15/\$12 members
Tours run every fifteen minutes.

Winter Wonderland Tours

Saturday, December 1-31

Holiday Lights Meander

Saturday, December 14
6:30-9:30 p.m.
(Last tour time 8:30 p.m.)

Member Appreciation Weeks

Members enjoy an extra 10% discount in the Mercer Shop for a total discount of 20%. Save these dates; shop for unique gifts:

August 18 – 24

December 1 – 7

Members Visit Mercer Museum & Fonthill Castle for FREE all year long.



Photo by Allure West Studios

Staff Update

The Mercer Museum and Fonthill Castle bid farewell to Jeanne Newberry who has retired after nearly 10 years as Business Manager with BCHS. As we wish Jeanne well and thank her for her years of service, we also welcome Roseann Winans to that position. Ms. Winans brings considerable public and nonprofit accounting experience to the organization. And we are pleased to announce that Daniel Miller has become the Visitor Services Coordinator at Fonthill. Dan has been a guide and receptionist at the Castle since 2010. ■

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.

2013 BCHS Board of Trustees



Members of the Board of Trustees on the steps in the Mercer Museum's Great Hall.

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castles on our website at
www.mercermuseum.org or
follow us on Facebook & Twitter.

Exhibits at the Mercer

Turning Points: Civil War, 1863-1864

Through
August 25



North Meets South.

COMING SOON: Mystery of the Mayan Medallion

September 21, 2013 – January 12, 2014

(See page 12 for a story on the exhibit.)

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

Plan your Party in Our New Spaces

www.mercermuseum.org/visit-us/facility-use.org



Holidays at the Castles

December 1-December 31

STEP RIGHT UP!

Behind the
Scenes of
the Circus
Big Top,
1890-1965.

Opening January 28, 2014

