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Media Contact

Gayle Shupack, gshupack@mercermuseum.org
215.345.0210. Ext 131

The Mercer Museum Presents its Annual Holiday Exhibition

Under the Tree: A Century of Holiday Trees and Toys

DOYLESTOWN, PA: (November 7, 2017) – The Mercer Museum will kick off the holiday season with its annual exhibit, *Under the Tree: A Century of Holiday Trees and Toys* on Saturday, November 18. The exhibit traces the evolution of Christmas in America and features trees decorated to the tastes of earlier eras together with displays of some of the toys and games that once delighted children on Christmas morning's past. *Under the Tree* will be on view at the museum until Sunday, December 31.

It was not until the mid-1800s that the modern Christmas celebration took root in America, becoming a truly national holiday with common rituals, symbols and meanings. *Under the Tree* brings together two of the most powerful symbols of the American Christmas—the tree and its trimmings, and the Christmas gift. While the holiday includes other important symbols and meanings, it is these two traditions which elicit particularly strong sentiments and memories among those who celebrate Christmas.

The Christmas trees on display in *Under the Tree* are decorated with period ornaments and quality reproductions that show the evolution of this Christmas tradition from the 1860's through the 1970's. Featured trees include a 1860's era tree decorated with candy, food and toys, a 1920's – 1940's era tree featuring celluloid plastic ornaments and German glass ornaments, a 1940's World War II tree decorated with paper rings and Christmas cards, a post World War II tree featuring "bubble lights," and a mid 1960's era aluminum tree with a revolving color wheel.

Toys, games and other playthings in the *Under the Tree* exhibit are drawn from major private collections. Featured toys on view are 1960's era Fisher-Price toys, Star Wars action figures from the 1970's, pop culture board games, Tonka trucks, classic wooden toys, and tin wind-ups.

To celebrate the opening day of *Under the Tree* on Saturday, November 18, children can make their very own ornament, typical of the 19th century, from 1– 3 p.m. The craft is included with museum admission. Other *Under the Tree*-related programs include Gingerbread in the Log House on Friday, November 24, from 11 a.m – 3 p.m. Historic foodways expert, Susan Plaisted demonstrates how gingerbread evolved from a mixture of ginger and breadcrumbs to its present-day form. The program is included with museum admission. Adults can learn how to make Victorian ornaments (spun glass Santas, tinsel and cotton ornaments) in a special workshop on Thursday, December 7 from 7 – 9 p.m. The workshop is \$18 per person. Registration is required and can be done by calling [215-348-9461](tel:215-348-9461).

Under the Tree: A Century of Holiday Trees and Toys is included with Mercer Museum admission. Museum admission is \$15 for adults, \$13 for seniors and \$8 for youth ages 6-17.

About the Mercer Museum

The Mercer Museum, one of Bucks County's premier tourist attractions, offers visitors a unique window into pre-Industrial America as seen through the implements used in everyday life. The Museum's collection includes more than 40,000 objects exhibiting the tools of more than 60 different crafts and trades, providing one of the world's most comprehensive portraits of material culture in America. The museum was designated as a National Historic Landmark in 1985 and a Smithsonian Affiliate in 2016. The Mercer Museum is located at 84 South Pine Street in Doylestown and is open for self-guided exploration 7 days a week. For more information, call 215-345-0210, or visit mercermuseum.org.

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