EXHIBIT LOOKS AT THE EVOLUTION OF CHRISTMAS IN AMERICA
Under the Tree: A Century of Holiday Trees and Toys
at the Mercer Museum

DOYLESTOWN, PA: (November 1, 2016) – The Mercer Museum kicks off the holiday season with its annual exhibit, *Under the Tree: A Century of Holiday Trees and Toys* opening on Saturday, November 19. The 3,500 square foot exhibition will feature an array of trees decorated to the tastes of earlier eras along 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 through Sunday, January 2.

It was not until the mid-1800s that the modern Christmas 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 as it has come to be – the tree and its trimmings, and the 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 1860s through the 1960s. Some of the trees on display include a late 1800s artificial "feather tree," a turn-of-the 20th century tree with large cotton and tinsel ornaments with die-cut printed "scraps," 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 and range from the Victorian era through the 1980s. Featured toys on view include

dolls and classic wooden toys, various tin wind-ups and banks, circus toys, antique and vintage board games, comic books, Baby Boomer toys including a 1950's era "Robby the Robot" mechanical figure. Other objects on display are a 1969 Premier Model Easy-Bake Oven and a 1985 original Xavier Roberts Cabbage Patch doll. In addition, visitors can try their hand at playing oversize versions of popular board games like Snakes and Ladders, Connect Four and Checkers.

In conjunction with the Under the Tree exhibit, children can make an ornament typical of the mid-1900s, on Saturday, November 19 from 1-3 p.m. The craft is included with museum admission. On Friday, November 25, from 11 a.m. – 3 p.m., historic foodways expert, Susan Plaisted explains the story of gingerbread as it evolved from a mixture of ginger and breadcrumbs to its present-day form. The program will take place in the Mercer's Log House and is included with museum admission. On Wednesday, December 8 from 7- 9 p.m., adults can craft Victorian ornaments using paper, fabric and die cut paper scraps. Projects will include tinsel and cotton ornaments, spun glass Santas, paper cutouts and fairy ornaments. The workshop is $15 per person. Registration is required and can be done by calling 215-348-9461.

Under the Tree: A Century of Holiday Trees and Toys is included with Mercer Museum admission. Museum admission is $14 for adults, $12 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 celebrates its Centennial in 2016 and was recently designated a Smithsonian Affiliate. The Mercer Museum is located at Pine Street & Scout Way 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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