

Fonthill Centennial Issue

This issue of Penny Lots commemorates Fonthill's 100th anniversary. It was May 1912 when Henry Mercer moved into his castle creation. In this newsletter, we'll share Mercer's own account of the innovative and experimental construction of Fonthill, new research on the workers of Fonthill, and Mercer's inspiration for components of the

house. Informing our research are the notebooks and meticulous records kept by Henry Mercer. Also included is information on some current projects indicating the ongoing care of the complex property as the Bucks County Historical Society continues its stewardship of this National Historic Landmark for future generations.

The Building of "Fonthill" at Doylestown, Pennsylvania, In 1908, 1909 and 1910

Copy of a typewritten description found among the papers of Henry Chapman Mercer

Several sketches and memoranda in my note books show that the building of "Fonthill" was first considered definitely during my visit to New England in the summer of 1907, and that the cheerful fronting of certain houses, overlooking Commercial Street, Boston, running N. N. E. by 1 point East, were studied for this purpose.

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Henry Chapman Mercer in front of the fireplace in Fonthill's Saloon. Mercer died at Fonthill in 1930 aged 73.

Byers' Choice Caroler® of Henry Mercer

In celebration of its centennial Fonthill announces the creation of a Byers' Choice Caroler® depicting Henry Chapman Mercer along with his dog, Rollo. Byers' Choice Ltd. of Bucks County is well known for its Carolers which are sold around the world.

The figurine will be for sale exclusively at Fonthill Castle and Mercer Museum Shop beginning in May. The cost of the Caroler will be \$70 for Henry Mercer and \$20 for Rollo; they may be purchased separately. BCHS members receive a 10% discount. For information contact the Mercer Museum Shop at museumshop@mercermuseum.org or 215-345-0210 x 130.



Byers' Choice Caroler® of Henry Mercer in tweed pants and matching vest; he is holding a tile representative of the Moravian Tiles he designed and produced. Rollo is at his side wearing a complementary scarf.

AAA Names Fonthill a 'Travel Gem'

Fonthill Castle has been selected by AAA's magazine *Home & Away* as one of the "uncommon travel gems" profiled in the Travel Treasures

section of its winter 2012 issue. *Home & Away* is distributed to 1.1 million household members of the American Automobile Association.



Henry Chapman Mercer's Fonthill, completed in 1912; photograph by Rosemary Taglialetela.

Natural Beauties Being Developed by H.C. Mercer

Intelligencer Newspaper, June 5, 1908

Reclaiming the Old "Fisher Farm" East of the Borough

Interesting Experiment in Erecting a Reinforced
Concrete House of Magnificent Proportions –
Making the Farm a Spot of Beauty

So quietly that the public knows almost nothing about it Henry C. Mercer in developing the great natural beauties of the old "Fisher Farm," east of the County Seat on Court street, some distance from the borough line, and trying an interesting experiment in building a reinforced concrete house four stories high.

It is more than the Fisher Farm which is being developed. It is several small adjoining properties on which are found a number of excellent springs, one of which a large one, is the beginning of Cook's Run. Beautiful groves

are found in different parts of the tract, which is magnificently located and attractively undulating, and all of the natural beauties are being reclaimed from the ravages of man. Woodland, creeks and springs are being cleaned of the refuse accumulated in them for years; a large quarry has been turned into a finely terraced nook with a spring at the bottom; a very old house is being restored and preserved; and the whole tract, which really takes in nearly all of the land bounded by East street, the Lumberville Road, Swamp Road and East Court

street, is being fenced in.

Only a tramp over the tract will give a full idea of the work being done. There are so many changes and such a variety of improvements that a written description would hardly do them full justice. And the work is still going on.

"slicking up" process, such as is employed in bridges of this structure. Edison, the Wizard, suggested something of this kind, but his idea of having giant molds has not met with a great deal of approval.

Speaking of that Mr. Mercer said, "The plan of building



Fonthill under construction ca 1910. Note original farmhouse on left being absorbed into Mercer's own architectural design.

Fonthill Recognized with Award

The Preservation Alliance of Greater Philadelphia has announced its 2012 Preservation Achievement Awards. The Alliance is giving an award to the Bucks County Historical Society for its outstanding service in preserving and protecting one of the region's most significant cultural assets Fonthill. The Special 100th Anniversary Recognition Award is being presented on the occasion of Fonthill's 100th anniversary. The Preservation Alliance is a non-profit organization which promotes the appreciation, protection and revitalization of the Philadelphia region's historic buildings, communities and landscapes. The awards are being presented at a luncheon to be held in Philadelphia in May.

Fonthill Castle

Fonthill, Fonthill Museum... **Fonthill Castle.** As part of the re-branding process for the organization, Fonthill will now be marketed as 'Fonthill Castle' to more accurately reflect the appearance and experience reflected in the house. Although known locally as 'Fonthill' that one word does not describe what the site is or what one might expect.

A new joint logo has been developed combining Mercer Museum and Fonthill Castle. A special centennial logo has been developed to recognize this important year. Visit the website www.fonthillmuseum.org to learn more about special tours (Intimate Henry, Building Henry's Castle Tour) and events.

Concrete House

As for the reinforced concrete house, that is an experiment. "I haven't any precedent for it," said Mr. Mercer Thursday. "I am simply following out my own ideas, and it may be a failure. Some of the experiments I am making would hardly be safe for an architect to suggest if he cared anything for his professional reputation. In making them myself I run the whole risk."

Certainly the beginning does not suggest failure. As yet, of course, the foundation walls are all that have been constructed, but they are heavy and strong and give an impression of endurance which even ages could hardly effect. The upper part of the structure will be more difficult, for everything, even steps, will be of reinforced concrete, and an interesting fact about the exterior will be the absence of any

houses with giant iron moulds is not feasible, because it would only result in plain, little bits of dwellings, all of the same style of architecture. There is a difference in constructing a house as we are doing it here for there is the greatest latitude for an expression of individuality. Another advantage will be the cheapness in constructing an enduring dwelling and men must eventually come to this scheme if timber continues to increase in price."

Incidentally, Mr. Mercer has constructed gigantic gate posts, patterned after a sketch made by him in Yucatan, and these will be of the rough concrete construction.

All these things are interesting, but above all is the fact that a garden spot, one of the most beautiful in this part of the county, is being preserved as a county seat. ■

“Henry Chapman Mercer’s Fonhill is perhaps one of the greatest of the individual American Arts and Crafts dwellings. It was totally created by an individual; and his eccentricity- and genius- is visible throughout.”

—Richard Guy Wilson, Architectural Historian, University of Virginia excerpted from A&E’s America’s Castles, 1987.

Mercer’s Tiles Provide Inspiration Today



Tile by Sarah Gilbert, 12th grade, included in Fonhill’s tile exhibit from February to March 2012. Students from Central Bucks High School East created tiles inspired by Henry Mercer’s many tile designs. Our thanks to teacher Ann Huuki for facilitating the important project.

From Frank Swain’s scrapbook

April 14 – 10 [1910?] Int [Intelligencer]

Visitors to Henry C. Mercer’s wonderful concrete palace on East Court street have their attention attracted to two things besides the house and the building operations if they make their visits on week days. One is a large rooster which answers the purpose of a watch dog and comes aggressively at visitors in an attempt to intimidate them, or attacks their feet if his bold and aggressive appearance doesn’t strike fear to their hearts. The other is the intelligent horse used to pull the rope of the block and tackle to haul up the cartoons (sic) of concrete. Time after time the faithful horse starts away at signal, stops when the carton reaches its destination, backs, turns around, comes back to its former place and gets in position for another trip, just as intelligently as a human being could. The work on the palace is progressing rapidly and the rough work may be completed this season. The great attraction at this time is the “Columbus Room” as well as the beautiful and artistic tiling in the ceiling of some of the other of the forty or more compartments. Men and women from all over the United States have visited the house and marveled at its construction.



Lucy, the horse who ‘Uplifted’ the concrete in the building of both Fonhill and the Mercer Museum.

Robert P. Leiby, Jr.’s Legacy

Bob Leiby was passionate about Henry Mercer’s museums. After he retired from banking, he looked for an organization to become involved with- he chose Fonhill. As a volunteer guide he enjoyed sharing the many facets of Henry’s life and house with visitors from all over the world. Bob also volunteered at Fonhill’s Old-Fashioned 4th of July, at the Mercer Museum’s Folk Fest and as a member of the Board of Trustees of the Bucks County Historical Society.

Bob left a lasting legacy by creating a Charitable Remainder Trust with the Bucks County Historical Society as the beneficiary. Mr. Leiby chose this vehicle for tax purposes. In addition, Mr. Leiby made provisions for BCHS in his will. As Bob explained some years ago about his planned gift “If you, like me, have received many hours of enjoyment visiting these museums why not create a trust with them. Even better, why not create a trust and become a volunteer. Try it, I guarantee you’ll like it.”

We were saddened to learn of Bob’s death last Fall but his legacy lives on. His Charitable Remainder Trust was thoughtfully unrestricted; we intend to apply a portion of the proceeds to the long term preservation of Fonhill. We think Bob would approve. The Plus Ultra Society recognizes those who have made provisions in their estate plans. The Museums offer many planned giving opportunities all of which can be tailored to your individual needs. Please call our Development Office at 215-345-0210, ext. 129 for more information.



Plus Ultra Tile in Fonhill. Plus Ultra, More Beyond became Mercer’s motto.

Guest book quotes

The following pages will include a sampling of visitor comments from the early days to the present.

**“It has been the consensus of opinion of his friends for years that Harry C. Mercer is the only man in America who has made every abstract idea he has ever had
CONCRETE.”**

—William J. Robinson, September 1914

“One must be filled with a sense of responsibility if he stops to reflect that the influence of his life, whether good or bad, will go on forever.”

— James M. Willcox, November 1914

Unique House Attracts Many

Philadelphia Bulletin,

July 29, 1911

Interesting features in New Residence
of Mr. H. C. Mercer at Doylestown, Pa.

FOLLOWS OLD WORLD PLAN

With suggestions of Lincoln Cathedral, Haddon Hall (see article p. 5), the seat of the Duke of Rutland in England, and a Turkish Mosque, the new residence of Mr. Henry C. Mercer of Doylestown, Penna. bids fair to be, when it is completed, one of the most interesting houses not only in this State, but also in the entire country. Three years ago the house was begun, and its completion is looked forward to in the autumn.

Standing in the centre of an expanse of eighty acres, surrounded by fine old trees, built upon an eminence commanding a superb view, the house from the outside presents an elevated and imposing appearance. On one side of the house is a spring from which the place derives its name — “Fonthill.” The house is built of concrete and was designed by Mr. Mercer, and every detail of the building of it supervised by him.

The main entrance is



Unidentified woman on original front steps of Fonthill, date unknown.

approached by a flight of steps on which are engraved in tiles of various colors the text; “Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.” Passing in through a large hall there is on the right a conservatory and dining-room and on the left a large living room, a library and smoking room. Upstairs there are various suites of rooms, including Mr. Mercer’s studio and private apartments. On the top of the house there is a large balcony and kitchen where meals can be served during hot weather.

The chief feature of the house is not only its departure



*One of 32 stairwells in Fonthill, this one is dedicated to Rollo, Mercer’s dog, who left his pawprints in the concrete; Columbus Room.
Photo by Jack Carnell.*

from the usual architectural rules, but the wonderful display of tiles, all of which have been designed by the owner himself. The ceiling of one room, bright with vivid colors of blue and yellow, pink and green, depicts the whole life and history of Columbus. Another in equally bright and brilliant design shows the map of Cortez, while at the top of the house is a large room known as the “Room of the Winds,” also decorated in appropriate and allegorical designs.

Marvelous in detail is the work in each room, and visitors from far and near come to look at and learn a lesson from a building which speaks not of the present, but of the distant past. The house in the inside has already begun to take on the appearance of age and as the visitor goes up and down the narrow winding stairways, also of concrete, and wanders in and out of the passages and curious byways, he is reminded of some old world dwelling which legend has filled with strange and thrilling tales. As time goes on, the house will doubtless become more interesting as many objects of antiquity and instruction will be added to it.

Mr. Henry C. Mercer was born in Doylestown, and is the son of Mr. and Mrs. William R. Mercer. He was graduated from Harvard in 1879 and at one time was curator and secretary of American and prehistoric archaeology in the University of Pennsylvania. He has traveled extensively in this country and Europe on many archaeological expeditions, and has made a number of interesting discoveries. He is also the author of several books. ■

Grant Funds Assist in Marketing the ‘Castle’

Fonthill has received a \$10,000 grant from Visit Bucks, the Bucks County Conference and Visitors Bureau in support of the castle’s Centennial. Specifically, the funds will assist with presenting centennial activities and in marketing the site beyond the region. Although some visitors from across the country experience Fonthill each year, the goal is to develop an even wider audience for this National Historic Landmark.

“It has been a real delight to see the originality developed here at Fonthill.”

— J.W. Stokes, 1912

“May the blessing of the Master Builder rest on this wonderful house of Dreams and Memories.”

— Isabel McIlhenny Nichols, Germantown, September 1912



Visitors participating in Fonthill's 'Behind the Scenes' examine tile details, here biblical stories are depicted in tile.

“A link in the chain of memories; a day of delight; a feast of art... This modern shrine of beauty will be the rich heritage of future generations. May they treasure it with the same love for things beautiful as its originator and creator. May they come here to admire and wonder, and go away to ‘think.’”

—William Rankin, May 1915



Visitors today enjoy the intricacies of Mercer's tile decorations, here in Fonthill's Library.

Haddon Hall a Design Source for Mercer

Jennifer Jarret

Jennifer Jarret is an Historical Architect and Fonthill volunteer

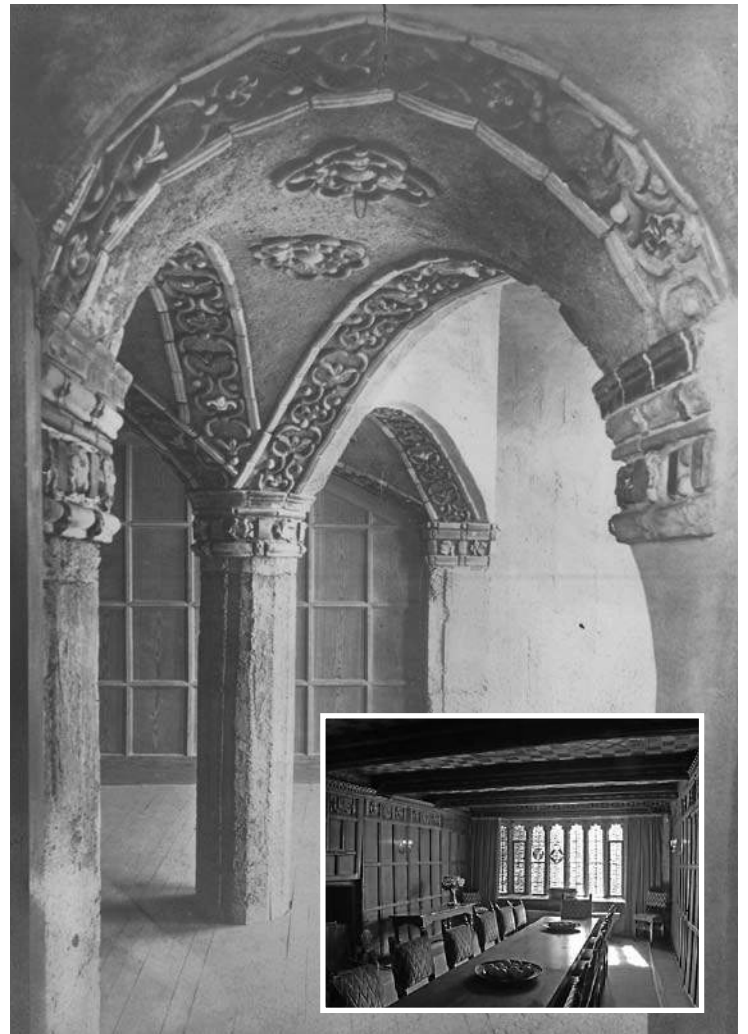
During his travels abroad in 1884, Henry Mercer visited the English countryside where in Derbyshire he saw Haddon Hall “a fortified medieval manor house dating from the 12th Century.”¹ Described as “the most perfect house to survive from the middle ages.” Haddon Hall is probably the finest example of a fortified medieval manor house in existence.² As it stands today, Haddon Hall has sections that date from the 12th century to the early 17th century and has been under the ownership of the same family since 1567.³ Consequently, Haddon Hall is largely unchanged from well before the time Mercer visited in the 1870's or 1880's.

Because little has changed over the recent centuries, Haddon Hall provides a unique view of early English life and history, something that undoubtedly connected with Mercer's appreciation of the historical. The 14th century Banqueting Hall seems to have been of particular interest to Mercer, this space would have been the principal dwelling room for the medieval manor and would have, at the time, been home for between 40 and 50 people.⁴ The decorative details of the Banqueting Hall are largely intact from throughout its history.

In his notes on Fonthill, Henry Mercer mentions that he was particularly interested in the paneling on the walls of the Banqueting Hall and used similar wood detailing in the Pine, Dormer and Oven Rooms.⁵ The geometries of the paneling in Haddon Hall and in Fonthill are unmistakably similar as is the overall tone and color of the wood. This is one of the clearest uses of precedent employed by Mercer in the design of Fonthill.

Notes:

1. Manners, Lord Edward. “Haddon Hall History.” Haddon Hall. Web. 25 Jan. 2012. <<http://www.haddonhall.co.uk/>>.
2. <<http://www.haddonhall.co.uk/>>
3. <<http://www.haddonhall.co.uk/>>
4. <<http://www.haddonhall.co.uk/>>
5. Mercer, Henry Chapman. The Building of Fonthill at Doylestown, Pennsylvania in 1908, 1909 and 1910. Copy of a typewritten description found among the papers of the late Dr. Henry Chapman Mercer. Fonthill Archives.



The paneling in Fonthill's Dormer Room is reminiscent of the paneling found at Haddon Hall. INSET PHOTO: Drawing inspiration from his travels Henry Mercer visited England's Haddon Hall (a medieval manor house) in 1884.

Fonthill Workers

Janeen White

Janeen White is a long time volunteer and member of the staff at Fonthill.

In the Annex stairway ceiling of Fonthill there is a tile tribute to the men (and horse) that Henry Mercer decided to recognize for their efforts in the construction of his new concrete home. This article gives us a glimpse into the background of four of these men.

In Henry Chapman Mercer's notes on the building of his home Fonthill, he writes: "From eight to ten unskilled day laborers at the then wages of \$1.75 a day, supervised by Patrick Trainor and under my constant direction, built the house in three summers, those of 1908, 1909 and 1910." These diligent workmen – aided by a horse named Lucy – are memorialized by Mercer in a tiled inscription found on a ceiling at Fonthill.

Managing the workers was Patrick B. Trainor, foreman of the crew that included his younger brother John. Their parents, natives of Ireland, had settled with the family in New Jersey – first in Ocean County, and eventually relocating to the Trenton area. While living there, Patrick attended school, became involved in local politics and held the position of town councilman.

At some point during his tenure, however, a question arose concerning Patrick's whereabouts. "Is Councilman Trainor's Seat Vacated?" asked a news report. "When Councilman Trainor's name was called by the clerk of the Chambersburg [NJ] Council last evening, that gentleman failed to

Doylestown Pa
May 30 - 1908

Mr. H. C. Mercer in agt with P.B. Trainor

Time Roll		Dr.
J.C. Trainor	4 Days @ \$1.75	7.00
Adolph Bergau	5 " " 1.75	8.75
Frank Smith	6 " " 1.75	10.50
John Keatts	6 " " 1.75	10.50
Scott Case	5 " " 1.75	8.75
John Jones	5 " " 1.75	8.75
Valentine Brock	5 " " 1.50	7.50
Hiram Carr	5 " " 1.50	7.50
Louis Jonash	5 " " 1.50	7.50
Horse & Cart	6 " " 1.50	9.00
P.B. Trainor	5 " " 2.00	10.00
Wm Hoffman	Sheet Iron	\$96.35

Received Payment in full
to date Patrick B. Trainor

A 1908 record of wages paid to workers constructing Fonthill.

answer." A fellow member "volunteered the statement that his absent colleague had gone to Pennsylvania to reside."

Patrick had indeed already moved to Doylestown, where in August he had wed Ellen Biglan, daughter of longtime resident James Biglan. The ceremony was performed at St. Mary's Church [now Our Lady of Mt. Carmel] with two hundred guests attending, followed

by "feasting and jollity after the knot was tied."

A former borough councilman himself, James Biglan owned a sizable farm on the west edge of town, and it was near here on Clinton Street that the newlyweds settled. Their daughter, Mary was born in June of 1887.

Patrick's political aspirations apparently remained strong, as he eventually

became a clerk of quarter sessions in the nearby courthouse and served as chairman of the Committee on Resolutions at the Republican County Convention in the fall of 1894.

Running again for the position of Deputy Clerk of the Quarter Sessions in 1902, he is described as a qualified candidate. "In the matter of capability, Mr. Trainor answers every requirement and would make a most careful and efficient clerk, which statement his record as Deputy will bear out. His candidacy therefore adds an excellent name to the list of Republicans available for this office."

When the Bucks County Commissioners met in the fall of 1906, they appointed Patrick to be an assessor in Doylestown's second ward; the following year he sought to remain in that post. It was reported that "the contest for Assessor promises to be a hot one. Mr. Trainor, Republican ... is making a strenuous campaign to be elected for the ensuing term ... and is in need of the office." Alas, election results show the loss to his opponent by a vote of 123 to 80.

However, a new position seemed to have opened up as the county's statement of finances for the year 1907 includes his "pay as tipstaff" in the amount of \$264.00.

During these years spent in the local political realm, Patrick appears to have also been involved in business with his brother John, who had relocated to the area as well. John's earlier marriage to Mary Gibney, cousin of Patrick's wife

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"Very gratefully thanking Dr. Mercer for a memorable day."

— Trenton Grade School Teachers Association, September 1926

Fonthill Workers

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Ellen, had ended in tragedy. Mary died of consumption in 1888 at the age of 27, and their infant son passed away several months later.

The 1894 Bucks County Directory, listing Patrick as deputy clerk in Orphan's Court, shows John C. Trainor as a "junk dealer" on Clinton Street. Subsequent directories list Patrick Trainor dwelling on the same street as a "junk dealer" (1898), "dealer" (1902) and finally "laborer" (1905).

His interest in buying and collecting "junk"—those objects discarded as unwanted by some but desired by others—as well as his need for employment, might explain how Patrick came to be hired by Henry Mercer. An avid collector himself who frequented such dealers, Mercer writes in his book "The Bible in Iron" that Trainor had seen "decorated stove plates about 1877 in a 'scrap heap' at Filmore [N.J.], and the Four Horsemen plate in the Bucks County Historical Society was "found by Mr. Patrick Trainor lying picture down as a stepping stone in a farmyard at Ottsville."

Whatever the circumstance of their first meeting, by the early months of 1908 payroll records show that Patrick was overseeing the construction of Henry Mercer's new house, in charge of a crew that included his brother John. It is Patrick as foreman who provides the horse Lucy to assist in the building efforts, possibly from the Biglan farm or perhaps his own animal used for hauling wagonloads of "junk" in the family business. With the rest of the men, they labor for years to build Fonthill and fulfill



Fonthill workers taking a break during construction. All the concrete used to build the house was mixed by hand.

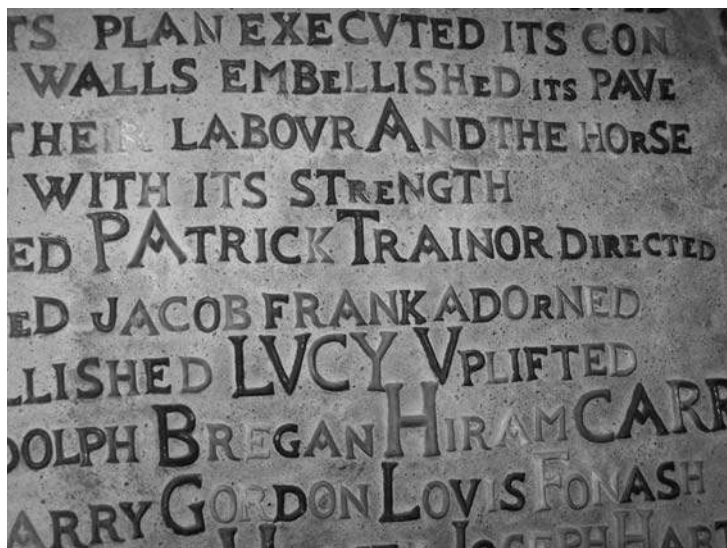
Mercer's vision for a home that is both "practical" and "poetic".

By the spring of 1910, with the exterior of the structure nearly completed, Henry Mercer writes in his journal that "Patrick sailed for Bermuda" on Saturday, March 26. Newspaper accounts show that Patrick Trainor had been at home with "the grip", and after having been ill for several days, was now "very much improved and expected to leave for Bermuda on a trip for his

health." Perhaps this trip was a gift from Mercer himself, a generous reward for a job well done from a grateful employer.

Payroll records indicate that while Patrick was away, his brother John assumed the duties of construction site manager, and James Biglan was paid for "three days with horse." John was now boarding with Patrick and family on the Biglan farm.

Returning a month later "very much improved in health and enthusiastic over his trip,"



*Detail of tile tribute to workers AND
Lucy the horse in servant's wing of Fonthill.*

Patrick resumed his duties at the Fonthill site. He continued to work for Henry Mercer during the next several years as building commenced on the new museum of the Bucks County Historical Society across town, before eventually moving back to New Jersey, but it is at Fonthill where his name still glows on the ceiling in colorful tiles.

**HERE SEE THE NAMES
OF THE MEN WHO
PLANNED THIS HOUSE -
DIRECTED ITS PLAN -
EXECUTED ITS CON-
STRUCTION - ADORNED
ITS WALLS - EMBEL-
LISHED ITS PAVEMENTS
- BUILT IT WITH THEIR
LABOUR - AND THE
HORSE WHO UPLIFTED
IT WITH ITS STRENGTH**

**HENRY MERCER
PLANNED - PATRICK
TRAINOR DIRECTED -
JOHN TRAINOR EXE-
CUTED - JACOB FRANK
ADORNED - HERMANN
SELL EMBELLISHED -
LUCY UPLIFTED**

Henry Mercer's handcrafted tiles were an integral component of Fonthill's allure, so choosing skilled workmen for the tile installation was paramount. Ceiling tiles were put into place during construction; those on the walls, floors, columns, fireplaces and furniture were added later. The exacting work of the ceiling displays fell to George Jacob Frank, a young man employed at the pottery, sometimes called Jacob or Jake. Mercer wrote: "With devoted skill and interest, George Jacob Frank has carried out all our elaborate designs, having not only modeled but also arranged and

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"What an explosion of creativity. When did he sleep?"

— Mr. & Mrs. Galfano, May 2010

Fonthill Workers

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set all the ceiling and many of the mural tiles at Fonthill.” Frank’s success with this difficult and challenging work earned him a special mention on the East Room ceiling of Fonthill, where a tiled inscription reads “JACOB FRANK POSUIT” (Latin for “put” or “placed”).

Apparently, his talents were not limited to tile work. An item in the local news in 1910 reported that “George Frank, an employee at the Moravian Pottery of Henry C. Mercer, has just completed a clay model of one of Mr. Mercer’s spaniels which is said to show exceptional ability. Critics who have seen it say it would do credit to

students who had studied sculpturing for several years.” Although photographs do exist of his dog statue, the fate of the piece is unknown.

George J. Frank, born in Philadelphia in 1885, had married Martha Fisher in 1907 when he was 22 years old. At some point following the completion of his work at Fonthill, they returned to Philadelphia where he took a job as shipping clerk at a clothing factory, and eventually became foreman. Frank died in 1962, and his wife the following year. They are both buried in the cemetery at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Church, Doylestown.

George Jacob Frank’s counterpart in the tile setting projects at Fonthill was Herman Sell. A

mason working in stone and brick, Sell had immigrated to America from Germany in 1893 with his wife Augusta Wilhelmina, their four children and \$100 in his pocket. Within a few years, records show the family living in Doylestown - initially on Cottage Street and then on Linden Avenue, close to the present site of Fonthill. Sell had built the first kiln for Henry Mercer’s studio at Aldie in 1899, “... in a woodshed adjoining the Indian House, after which two larger kilns were built in a fire-proof shed, constructed of tin, clay and cement.”

Mercer wrote later that Sell, “though not regularly employed at the pottery, has set innumerable pavements, particularly those at Mrs.

Gardner’s Fenway Court in Boston, and many mural tiles by various new methods, besides building all the kilns ever constructed at the pottery.” Sell was responsible for setting the tiled floors of Fonthill, including the intricate “pavement” of the Columbus Room, which Mercer noted took “about four days” in February 1910. Later that year he was busy setting tiles on the roof.

Herman Sell passed away in 1918 at the age of 62, and is buried with his wife in the Doylestown Cemetery. His handiwork – along with that of George Jacob Frank – is still evident in the beautiful tile displays at Fonthill, which continue to impress and delight visitors to this day. ■

Fonthill Castle Historic Window Treatments

Through a generous grant from Ye Olde Almshouse Questers, curatorial staff and volunteers had the necessary funding to choose appropriate window treatments for two rooms within Fonthill Castle.

A previous grant awarded by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC) in 2008, provided funds for in-depth research and documentation of window treatments that hung during Henry Mercer’s occupancy 1912-1930. The original treatments were removed during the 1970s-1980s as a necessary preservation response to their deterioration after years of exposure to sunlight, fluctuating temperatures and humidity. These textiles were carefully preserved and provided curatorial staff a rare opportunity to have a first-hand look at the originals.

Research and historic photographs confirm that Henry Mercer purchased a French tapestry with a “cursive floral scroll pattern [of a] very pretty



Members of Ye Olde Almshouse Questers in front of reproduction drapes in Fonthill’s Library in 2011. The Questers Chapter provided funding for the project.

blue landscape” from William Patton of Philadelphia, ca. 1912. He installed this pattern as a window treatment in the Library and as a portiere (door covering) in the Breakfast Room. After consultation with Fonthill guide and interior designer Kathy Appel, an appropriate reproduction was purchased and installed. Also woven in France, the reproduction shares similar design elements of Mercer’s original – beautiful floral motifs in the

foreground, a dominant central tree, and the same vibrant colors of blues, yellows and greens.

We are excited about the possibilities of securing future grants and donations to continue purchasing reproduction fabrics for window treatments throughout the Fonthill Castle. Please contact Collections Manager, Sara Good, regarding funding opportunities. 215-345-0210 ext 119 or sgood@mercermuseum.org



Henry Mercer’s Original Tapestry that hung in the Library. Due to significant light damage and its fragile condition this textile has been placed in collections storage.

Janeen White

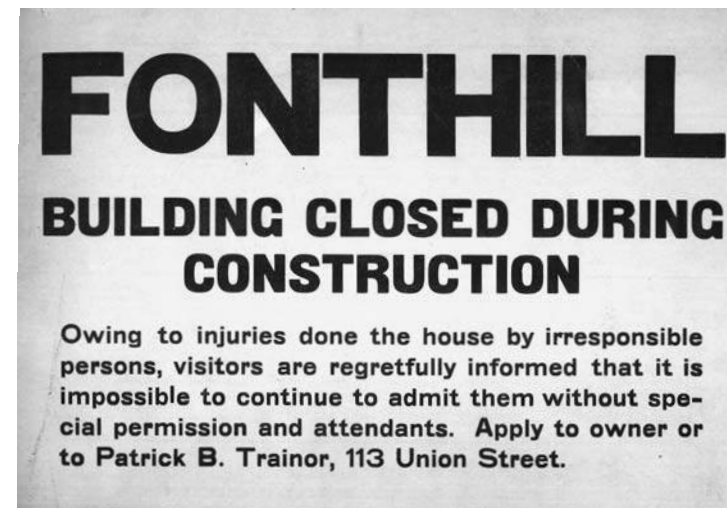
Fonthill Construction

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to remodel the old house on the Fisher farm, on East Court Street, in the township."

The house and outbuildings of the Thierolf tract were to form the central core of his new home. With his keen interest in the past and passion for preservation, it is not surprising that Mercer decided to utilize the old homestead in creating his new abode. As construction began that spring, it was noted that "Henry C. Mercer will make an effort to have some of the oldest buildings in Doylestown preserved from demolition as historic landmarks. An old stone house on A. F. Weisel's farm and the oldest house in Doylestown on the Werner property on North Main Street will be kept in repair by Mr. Mercer by consent of the owners." He was instrumental not only in saving the latter, an old log house, but eventually having it moved to the Historical Society grounds. Fittingly, the fieldstone farmhouse on his own property would likewise escape destruction when it was ultimately encased in a layer of concrete and incorporated into his new residence, "Fonthill".

It would require several years of intense labor, however, for Mercer's vision to be realized. In October 1908, it was reported that "Henry C. Mercer's remarkable reinforced concrete house in the township is nearing completion of the third story, and much of the tile decoration which is done as the building is erected has been completed. Just now the workmen are rushing the flooring of the fourth story to completion so that it can be waterproofed to withstand the winter, as it will be impossible to work on it much longer." Mercer – who had no formal training as an architect – told the reporter:



Sign posted by Mercer in response to damage created by vandals at Fonthill while the house was under construction.

"When we started this building an expert on concrete buildings laughed at the theory advanced, but since he has seen the progress we have made and the success met with, there is a change in his attitude."

By December, construction of the exterior had ceased as cold weather set in.

That spring and summer brought renewed building activity to the Fonthill site. Reports in August noted that "so much progress has been made on Henry C. Mercer's concrete mansion that the men are about ready to put on the roof. Hundreds of visitors frequent the place every week inspecting this innovation in house building." Through the fall, the work was "progressing nicely" with "a portion of the concrete roof having been finished" by early September.

All the while, the public continued to be drawn to Mercer's unique and unusual creation. An autumn gathering of educators attending the Bucks County Teachers' Institute in Doylestown brought added attention as there was a "general rush this week among the teachers to see the castle Henry C. Mercer is erecting just beyond the borough line. Every evening loads go out after the Institute sessions end."

A local newspaper's November 1st edition held stories of festive celebrations in Doylestown the previous evening as "Spooks Roamed Abroad on Mystic Halloween". More than two hundred people, it was claimed, had visited Henry Mercer's "new concrete residence, now nearing completion" on Sunday, October 31. What better place to visit on Halloween night than a mysterious castle!

In December 1909, the news took a more disturbing turn with the following report: "Vandals broke in the door at Henry C. Mercer's new concrete house on East Court Street and as a consequence other persons were not allowed to inspect the interesting building. Some time ago vandals tore a number of tiles from the walls and for that reason parties have only been allowed to go through the place with a guide." Although he had apparently invested in locks and the occasional night watchman for the construction site, Mercer now reacted to potential trespassers by posting a stern warning at the site.

Despite these setbacks, work continued into the new year as Mercer strove to have his home completed. The progress being made was doc-

umented in local news reports.

December 10, 1909: "Elmer Barnes, whose ornamental ironwork has attracted much attention from art connoisseurs all over the country, is at present making an attractive weather vane for Henry C. Mercer's new concrete palace. It represents a kneeling Indian making fire."

January 14, 1910: "Rufe Brothers are putting an elevator in Henry C. Mercer's new house".

February 11: "Henry C. Mercer is having some very old stove plates reproduced at the foundry ...for use in fireplaces in Mr. Mercer's new home."

March 6: "Rufe Brothers have been awarded the contract to install the steam heating plant in Henry C. Mercer's new concrete house."

May 4: Edward R. Walton, electrician, is wiring Henry C. Mercer's new concrete house for electric lights."

In June 1910, a number of architects traveled from Philadelphia to Doylestown to examine the "new concrete palace". They were said to be "delighted", "astonished" and "amazed" by what they saw.

The basic construction of the house was nearly done by that autumn. On October 14, it was reported that "Henry C. Mercer's new concrete mansion is nearing completion after three years of work. The structural part is practically completed and under roof. The interior finishing and the installation of the heating apparatus is progressing. It is expected that part of the mansion will be ready for occupancy by spring and that the whole house will be completed within a year."

It would be another eighteen months before Henry Mercer finally moved into his new home. ■

Mercer's Inspiration

Jennifer Jarret

In the last half of the 19th century, Henry Mercer was traveling through Europe on the Grand Tour. Beginning in the late 16th century, young members of the aristocratic class completed their educations with a period of European travel. This so-called Grand Tour could last from a few months to eight years, thus only the very wealthy, with the time and means to travel, could participate.¹ Thanks to his Aunt Elizabeth, Henry was able to augment his Harvard education with this well-heeled right of passage.

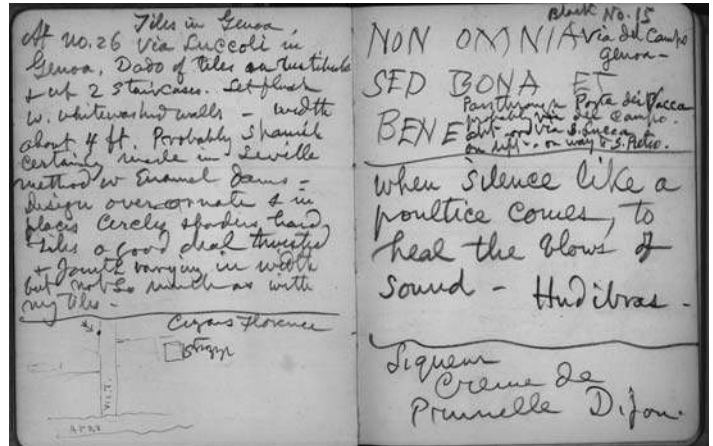


*"Non Omina sed Bona et Bene"
Latin inscription on stairs at
Fonthill inspired by Mercer's
visit to Genoa, translated as
"Not All but Good and Well."*

"The Grand Tourist was typically a young man with a thorough grounding in Greek and Latin literature as well as some leisure time, some means, and some interest in art." Accompanied by a teacher or guardian, the traveler was expected to return home with souvenirs of their travels as well as an understanding of art and architecture formed by exposure to great masterpieces.² "London was a frequent starting point for Grand Tourists, and Paris a compulsory destination; many traveled to the Netherlands, some to Switzerland and Germany, and a very few adventurers to Spain, Greece, or Turkey."³ Mercer

did visit both Spain and Turkey and looked to them for design inspiration of both tiles and architecture.

The essential place to visit on the tour, however, was Italy. "Grand Tourists often saw paintings and sculptures by gaining admission to private collections, and many were eager to acquire examples of Greco-Roman and Italian art for their own collections."⁴ During the Grand Tour, men of means often applied what they learned from the villas they saw and the evocative ruins of Rome to their own country houses and gardens.⁵ Mercer was no exception, he used many precedents he saw during his travels on the details and design of Fonthill. When he writes about the construction of Fonthill, Mercer specifically mentions the city of Genoa. Located on the northwestern Italian



*Reference to Genoa and Latin inscription in
one of Henry Mercer's notebooks.*

coast, Genoa is an important seaport in northern Italy. Genoa is comprised of Mediterranean-looking houses topped by red terracotta roofs and lots of tiny and quirky alleyways. While exploring these narrow streets and alleys called Caruggi, in the historic city center, Mercer noticed Latin phrases above several old house doorways. Specifically, he writes about 15 Via del Campo "Non Omina sed Bona et Bene"⁶ (Not All but Good and Well). Not only does this inform Mercer's own use of tiled words throughout Fonthill it is also similar to a phrase he assigned to one of his tile designs as well.

Although difficult to see due to the angle and low light, on the risers of the stairs from the Gallery to the Central Hall Mercer wrote in tile "Non Omina sed Bona et Bene." So the next time you tour Fonthill, bring a flashlight or ask your guide to illuminate the tiles and you too can reflect on Mercer's effort to remember all that was good and well in Genoa. ■

1. "What Was the Grand Tour?" Italy on the Grand Tour. The J. Paul Getty Trust and Museum Exhibitions. Web. 25 Jan. 2012. <http://www.getty.edu/art/exhibitions/grand_tour/what.html>.
2. Sorabella, Jean. "The Grand Tour." Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History. The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Web. 25 Jan. 2012. <http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/grtr/hd_grtr.htm>.
3. Sorabella, Jean. Web. 25 Jan. 2012.
4. Sorabella, Jean. Web. 25 Jan. 2012.
5. Sorabella, Jean. Web. 25 Jan. 2012.
6. Mercer, Henry Chapman. The Building of Fonthill at Doylestown, Pennsylvania in 1908, 1909 and 1910. Copy of a typewritten description found among the papers of the late Dr. Henry Chapman Mercer. Fonthill Archives.

Did You Know?

Henry Mercer was 51 when he began construction of Fonthill in 1908. Fonthill was the first of his three concrete buildings in his hometown of Doylestown (followed by the Moravian Pottery and Tile Works and

then the Mercer Museum). Mercer's concrete castle home boasts 44 rooms (10 bathrooms, 5 bedrooms), 32 stairwells, more than 200 windows, and 18 fireplaces. All the concrete in Fonthill's construction was mixed by

hand! Thanks to Mercer's meticulous record-keeping we know that it cost \$32,482 to build Fonthill.

Fonthill, accredited by the American Association of Museums, has been featured on A&E's "America's Castles"

and in Martha Stewart Living magazine. The museum is open daily for guided tours. The regular tour is free to BCHS members; reservations are strongly suggested. Visit fonthillmuseum.org for more information.

What the Heck Is It?

Admittedly not the “prettiest” artifact on display at Fonthill Castle, but certainly the most appropriate for this special issue of Penny Lots. Standing at 7 feet tall and made of metal, this object played an essential role during construction or should I say “deconstruction.” Heads Up! Edward Reidell, Fonthill Site Administrator, holds the mystery object.

Answer on page 15



Teachers Visit Queer House

Bucks County Gazette (Bristol, PA) Oct. 29, 1909

The Henry C. Mercer concrete house here, built in violation of all former rules governing the use of concrete, is approaching completion. Every school marm in the county has paid it a visit and will doubtless have quite a good deal to say about it to her school when she gets back next week. Both Mr. Mercer and his genial foreman, Patrick Trainer, are glad to welcome visitors and tell them all about it.

Controlling the Sunday ‘Mob’

From the papers of Frank Swain circa 1930,
after Henry Mercer’s death



Frank Swain with Rollo.



Laura as a young woman.

The Dickens Connection

In 2012 an international celebration of the life and works of Charles Dickens marks the bicentenary of the author’s birth. In 2012 we mark the centennial anniversary of Fonthill as Henry Mercer’s home. What is the connection?

Henry Mercer’s Aunt Elizabeth (Elizabeth Chapman Lawrence) left funds in her will to Henry with which he constructed Fonthill, his home. Mercer then dedicated the richly decorated Columbus Room to his aunt, EL. Elizabeth Lawrence had actually met and dined with Charles Dickens in London in 1855 (her second London season) and short correspondence is re-



*Detail of a panel from the Dickens' Pickwick Papers fireplace in Fonthill's West Room.
Photo by Jack Carnell Photography.*

counted in her biography, “The Bread Box Papers.” Dickens had referred to Elizabeth as “that little Darling” in a note to his friend, William Thackeray. The Lawrences were also invited to Dickens’ home for a performance of one of Dickens “private theatricals.”

Henry Mercer’s first picture book fireplace developed from an important custom order in 1914 from Margaret Agnew Adams (Mrs. J. Howe) of Paoli, Pennsylvania. The completed Pickwick fireplace contains five panels adapted from illustrations into Mercer’s tile compositions. In 1915 The Tile Works produced a flyer advertising the Pickwick fireplace which was installed in Fonthill’s West Room that same year. Mercer also owned a set of Charles Dickens’ works in his library.

I am anxious to know what arrangements will be made by the Trustees (of Fonthill) in re Fonthill. Some one will have to be paid for showing people through, and the Sunday mob, uncultured and thievish, must be kept out. Dr. Mercer and Laura (Mrs. Swain) talked it over and she said she would look after the house & show people through at about her regular wages. This would be less that heretofore because she got her board besides. There is a good deal to look after, to see that Fonthill is kept in condition. I hope she is strong enough to do it for she knows better than anyone else from all these years experience.

2012 Construction Day & “Building Henry’s Castle” Tour

A special family event on Monday, May 28/Memorial Day celebrates the completion of the construction of Fonthill. Various activities will be available from noon – 4 pm. Also on the grounds will be Doylestown’s County Seat Bicentennial Car Show.

A new tour, Building Henry’s Castle, will be debuted on Memorial Day. This special tour explores the construction and inspirations for Fonthill Castle. The tour will continue to be offered regularly throughout the summer. The BCHS member price for the tour is \$8 for adults, \$4 youth.

“Great house. Wouldn’t want to clean it.”

— Jean & Dave Morales, Oct. 2008

Laura Swain Remembered

Editor's note: Laura Long moved in to Fonthill with Henry Mercer as his housekeeper. She later married Frank Swain, Mercer's foreman at the Tile Works. The Swains lived at Fonthill with Henry Mercer. After Mercer's death in 1930, the Swains were granted life tenancy of Fonthill by Mercer in his will. As it was Mercer's intention to leave Fonthill as a museum of prints and tile, Laura Swain gave tours to the visiting public. Many people locally remember those tours being either brief or extensive depending on Laura's

demeanor of the day. Frank Swain died in 1954; Laura continued to give tours until 1974 when she became too ill to continue. The Bucks County Historical Society assumed operation of Fonthill in 1975.

If you have a personal recollection of Laura Swain you would like to share, post on our Henry Chapman Mercer Facebook page, email info@fonthillmuseum.org or call Fonthill at 215-348-9461.

Sherri Fitzpatrick Hollyman shared her recollection of Laura Swain on Facebook:

"I am 49 years old. Forty some years ago my brother and I, along with our friends from the neighborhood used to play on the grounds at Fonthill, "The Castle" as we called it. When we could each save fifty cents we would pay the elderly woman who was the care taker for a tour. It was never the same tour. It changed based on her mood, which most of the time was mean and pushy. But we always went back and knocked on the little door next to the kitchen to see if she would allow us in. It's funny to me how we played there as

children and had no idea how special that was at the time. I was Miss Pennsylvania USA in 1986 and also visited there one day. When I was married we had bridal party photos taken on the back stairs of the servants' quarters. Mercer Castle will always hold a very special place in my heart. I live far away now, but the next time I go home for a visit I hope to stop by to see all the changes and hopefully see the things, like the little kitchen the elderly woman would make tea in before she would allow us to take the tour."

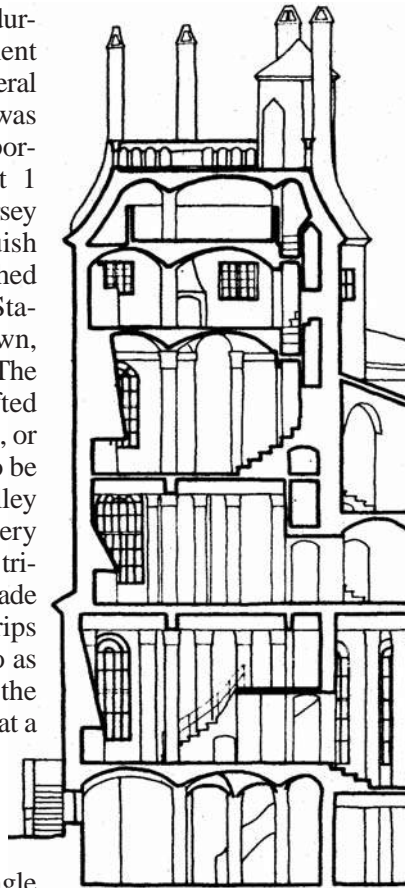
The Building of Fonthill

continued from page 1

The house was planned at "Aldie," Doylestown, Pa., by me in the winter of 1907, room by room, entirely from the interior, the exterior not being considered until all the rooms had been imagined and sketched after which blocks of clay representing the rooms were piled on a table, set together and modeled into a general outline. After a good many changes in the profile of tower, roofs, etc., a plaster-of-Paris model was made to scale, and used till the building was completed.

From eight to ten unskilled day laborers at the then wages of \$1.75 a day, supervised by Patrick Trainor and under my constant direction, built the house in three summers, those of 1908, 1909 and 1910. I employed no architect to carry out my plans and there were no skilled laborers employed in the construction proper, though afterwards a carpenter put in the doors and window sash, a mason set the tiles on the vertical walls and a painter put in the window glass. As a single exception to this Jacob Frank, employed at the Moravian Pottery, set the ceiling tiles which

were cast into the building during its construction. Cement mixers were not then in general use and all the cement was mixed by hand in the proportions of Portland Cement 1 part, yellow sand (called Jersey gravel), 2 ½ parts, and bluish crushed trap from the crushed stone works at Rockhill Station, south of Quakertown, Bucks County, Pa., 5 parts. The mixed material was lifted either in iron wheelbarrows, or boxes, with four handles, to be carried by two men by a pulley fastened at the vertex of a very simple apparatus, namely, a triangle about ten feet high, made of three heavy wooden strips balanced with guy ropes so as to swing outward from the brink of any of the walls or at a hand pull backward inside the edge. This inward swing brought the uplifted load within the triangle to the workmen's hands. A single horse belonging to Patrick Trainor, named Lucy, trained to pull forward the pulley rope, on a counter block and back on the path, did all the work of lifting during the three years. No accidents happened to the men whose names are set in tile letters on one of the inner



Cross section of Fonthill's tower; researched and drawn by Kurt Eichenberger, 1982.

roofs of the east gable.

Thunderstorms frequently occurred, but only one so damaged the ceiling of the Library gallery that the crust had to be

replaced. The men were trusted to count the ingredients and mix the cement properly. They only failed once on leaving a mixed batch to stand over night and then unwillingly removing the rotted mixture after pouring it into the forms.

During construction the building was roughly roofed with felt paper. The re-enforcing irons used everywhere according to approved formulae were hollow ¾-inch and less iron pipes bought in junk yards in Philadelphia and Doylestown, except for the beams, where solid iron rods, not twisted, were used in the usual way after bending around posts, to the proper angles, six per beam. Besides this, heavy galvanized farm fencing, in large rectangular mesh, was laid over all the re-enforcements.

The plan of the whole house was an interweaving of my own fancies blending with memories of my travels and suggestions from several engravings, in particular the "Dutch Housekeeper" by Gerard Dow, the "Great Barn" by Wouvermans, in the Dresden Gallery and a Lithograph now

...continued on page 14

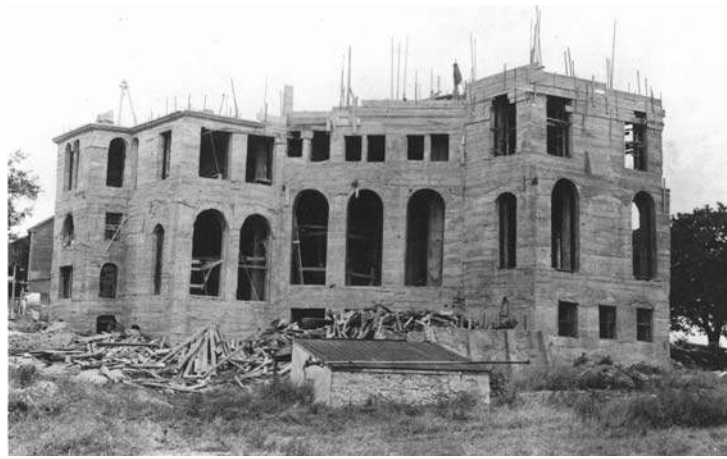
The Building of Fonthill

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in my Morning Room called "Le Main Chaud" by De Boucourt, also a woodcut illustrating a story called "Haunted" in a book published about 1865 by *Tinsley's Magazine*, named "A Stable for Nightmares." This picture gave me the night lighting of the Morning Room. (See *Penny Lots*, Vol. 26, No. 1). The first interior imagined and clearly seen was that of the west side of the Saloon seen when standing near the large window about eight feet from the door to the Library. The arrangement of rooms at different levels seen over the gallery in the Saloon is a memory of a Turkish house seen by me from a rear garden in Salonica in 1886. The Saloon still clearly retains the appearance of these preliminary dreams, but the original fancies for nearly all of the other rooms were changed as we proceeded sometimes for the better and sometimes for the worse.

The name Fonthill well remembered as that of a house in Essex County, Virginia, belonging to my distant relative, Mr. R. M. T. Hunter, seemed very appropriate on account of the fine spring rising here on a hilltop close to the northwest corner of the tower. I long hesitated with it on account of its earlier celebrity in the historic "Fonthill" of Beckford in Wiltshire, England, long since destroyed, but finally decided to use it on the advice of an English friend of high authority.

THE WALLS—The foundations, not over 5 feet deep, rested on a solid ledge of sandstone, but as this sub-stratum was generally covered with a dense crust of broken stones and grit I doubted its existence until when later, fearing collapse, we tried to under-pin the tower. Then the trenches dug



Fonthill under construction showing massive walls and window placement. No two of the more than 200 windows are the same dimension.

for this purpose proved the fact.

Several demolished buildings, followed by car loads of unplanned boards, furnished the wooden material for the forms. These consisted of partitions made by laying the boards horizontally, edge to edge one upon another, with battens nailed wherever convenient against their outer sides. Double lengths of wire were looped around and twisted upon the projecting ends of these battens as we proceeded to keep the forms from bulging. These forms were set vertically with a spirit level, and not by eye, as has been asserted. Where high winds deflected them or where they sagged or where mistakes were made the results were corrected after construction by chiseling away projecting corners or building up crusts as against the north corner of the east gable. Nevertheless, the north library wall still shows a bad overhang. Pieces of tin were tacked over knot holes, large cracks and open joints. Owing to warping the board joints never fitted close and there was continual leakage of liquid cement. This produced many porous spots on the outer wall which were plastered over afterwards. The concrete was purposely not spaded inside the walls in the hope of making them more porous. Continued suggestions as to dampness,

resulting in rheumatism, etc., caused us to cast large vertical holes by means of collapsible wooden boxes invented by me, stove pipes filled with dry sand, pulled upward as we proceeded, and even corn stalks wrapped in paper at intervals of a few feet throughout all the walls. The cornstalk plan was, however, a failure as the leaves flew in all directions into the forms and the wet stalks would not burn out of the holes. Angles in the very irregular chimneys, and the chimneys themselves, were cast upon wooden boxes or boards pounded, pried, or burnt out afterwards. The walls were cast two feet thick and the box holes either two feet long and one foot wide or one foot square. Piers, three feet by three and a half, bordered the windows in the tower, the inner wall of which for extra strength, enclosing the staircase, etc., was cast very thick. The vertical re-enforcing pipes were planted two feet apart in the forms and straightened as we went up. The fence wire was slid down against them and the horizontal pipes laid in on the wet cement at every two feet. The arches over many of the windows were made by bending $\frac{1}{4}$ inch by 3 inch wide wooden strips into semi-circles to coincide with a penciled line on the outer forms and the welts left by these still

show in the Morning Room. The result of our precautions as to wall ventilation, namely, loose tamping, collapsible boxes, and cement batches mixed by hand and greatly varying in density, were very successful. Blackened shoes in dark closets never mildew. There has never been condensation of moisture except on the tile pavement in the hall. Cigars dry up in their boxes, Windsor chairs rattle loose.

Owing to the color of the Jersey gravel, gray cement and bluish trap, the outer walls show soft gray-yellow with faint greenish reflections and, owing to the roughness of the forms, board welts, and porous spots not retouched, the texture is very rich as seen at a distance. In experimenting upon smoothing down these outer surfaces for weather protection with cement plaster, when a mason working upon a hanging platform did the work, we found that the plastering had been carried too far on the east upper wall of the tower and thereafter proceeded by retouching only the very porous spots.



An early view of the Columbus Room the most heavily tiled room in the house.

COLUMNS—The columns intended to support roof-slopes and upper story partitions rise from the cellar to the housetop through several rooms without symmetrical arrangement.

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The Building of Fonthill

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Column capital in Fonthill's basement where Mercer experimented with different approaches. This is the 'owl-like face' based on one seen at Mont St. Michel in France.

Their forms were made by boards set vertically and held together in circles with rope and wire or in squares with battens. Each was re-enforced with three vertical pipes and wire circles twisted by hand and dropped down the forms about two feet apart as the work went on. Tiled capitals and bases and cement capitals were put on after construction. Some of the latter in the wind-room were taken from very old Byzantine churches in Greece, and one, the owl-like face in the cellar, from Mont St. Michel in France. An octagonal wooden column used by one of my friends, an architect, in a house near Philadelphia and adapted by him from a column in the Castle of Tratzberg, in the Austrian Tyrol, suggested the polygonal columns, two or three of which are octagons, while the others have nine faces

or are made circular by the use of narrow wooden strips in the form. The columns referred to by visitors, one made with stovepipes and the other with nail kegs are in the cellar of the east wing. One column was cut off during construction in the yellow room to make way for the bed. Some of the columns were plastered after construction with lime and sand mortar, others with cement. Some were left untouched and some slightly retouched.

PARTITIONS—The interior partitions connected with or supported by the columns were cast about five inches thick and re-enforced as usual. The wooden window frames and sash were made at Doylestown and Lansdale and the frames cast into the wall during construction. The cement windows were cast in channels cut with wire loops in slabs of clay and were re-enforced with thin iron rods and set in their wall-holes after construction. Those on the hall stairs are the first of their kind ever made to the writer's knowledge, but in these the stone ingredients were too large. One of them with another on the west terrace have cracked around the irons. But those made later with chosen ingredients in the garage or with large mullions in the Historical Building have been very successful.



This view of the tower shows the great variety of chimneys and their locations. Certain fireplaces drew much better than others.

CHIMNEYS AND STAIRCASES—Some of the chimneys and staircases were formed with the building, others cast upon it. The chimneys above the roof were varied in height and their caps sometimes altered for draught. Many of the flues are very tortuous. Most draw very well but a few are smoky in certain winds and defy correction, namely, those in Mr. Swain's room and the East Room. That

in the yellow room radiates its heat badly, and that in the Library which smoked in west winds has been corrected. The Morning Room and Study fireplaces draw and heat well and that in the Saloon is probably one of the most efficient open fireplaces ever built. The hot air flues were made of round terra-cotta pipes cast in the walls. ■

To be continued in the next newsletter.

From page 12

That's What the Heck It Is!

It's a water pipe! Or wait, was it really used as a water pipe?

Purchased by Patrick Trainor and used during the construction of all three of Henry Mercer's buildings, this water pipe was adapted to pry off the original wooden frames that were used to mold architectural features.

General Information

Fonthill Castle

East Court Street & Rte. 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)

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.

www.fonthillmuseum.org

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

Penny Lots

Molly Lowell, Editor

Gayle Shupack, Associate Editor

Penny Lots is a benefit of membership.

Permission must be obtained to reprint any material.

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



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**Fonthill Receives
Special Award**
— see p.2

Tribute to Rollo

From a notebook of Henry Chapman Mercer



*Henry Mercer and Rollo, his beloved
Chesapeake Bay Retriever.*

April 30, 1916, about 1:00 pm

Dear old Rollo died under the cherry tree in front of Fonthill.

He had been suffering with a wasting distemper for about two months. Thank heaven that it was permitted me to poorly appreciate his intense and boundless love for me – and that I petted him more as his beauty faded and his strength failed in paralysis and his loving eyes lost their sight – that we lifted him into the back for daily trips to the historical society – and that I never failed to answer when he called and often brought back the old smile upon his devoted face. May his footsteps outlast many generations of men on his stairways at Fonthill and the Bucks County Historical Society.

Shall we who know that in about 300 years such love as this sprung, for Rollo, out of the ancestral heart of the ferocious wolf, doubt that the hand of a loving father wrought the wonderful change? Dare we assert that the divine evolution of LOVE

stopped here, and deny for Rollo the life beyond the grave which we claim for ourselves?

The cherry blossoms were not yet out on that sad day. May I meet you again where they are in full bloom, dear old BOY!

Celebrate the 4th of July at Fonthill!



Fonthill's Old-Fashioned 4th of July will also commemorate Fonthill's 100th anniversary. The decorated bike parade is always a crowd pleaser. Volunteers are needed to make this community event a success. Sponsorship opportunities are available also.

*Please contact
215-348-9461 to sign up.*