



MERCER MUSEUM & FONTHILL CASTLE

Winter-Spring 2015

Newsletter of the Bucks County Historical Society

Vol. 29 Number 1

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Events at the Mercer Museum

For All the World to See Members' Preview Reception

September 5, 2014



The Back Bench Boys performed.



Linda N. Salley and quilt.



*For All the World to See Exhibit Sponsors:
Left to Right: Angelina Hatchoose, Yvette E.
Taylor-Hachoose, Louise & Brian McLeod,
Melissa V. Bond, Tom Thomas and the Honorable
Clyde W. Waite & Verna Hutchinson.*



Mercer Museum in lights.

Cocktails at the Castle

October 10, 2014



Guests dining and exploring Central Court



*Nigeria Ambassador of Art, Ibiyinka Alao
with Cocktails Ed Jarrett and Doris Carr.*



*Mercer Museum Executive Director, Doug Dolan, with longtime
friends and supporters, Nancy and Roy Kolb.*



S & B Event Concepts and Catering

Then and Now at Fonthill



James and Pauline Oline, 1946



Stefan and Amanda Oline, 2014

When a building as memorable as Fonthill Castle has been around for over 100 years, perhaps it should not be a surprise that generations of a family develop connections to it. Last year, Stefan Oline stopped into Fonthill with an old photograph. In the photograph, a couple is standing next to a “Merceresque” concrete wall with a balustrade visible behind them. He told Fonthill’s staff that it was a photo of his grandparents and he had been told the photograph was taken at Fonthill.

After a lot of sets of eyes studied the picture and after much debate and discussion, Fonthill’s staff concluded that the most likely spot where the picture was taken was on the terrace of the garage building next to Fonthill. When Stefan heard about this he asked if he and his fiancé could have their picture taken in the same spot. Ever the romantics, Fonthill’s staff agreed and made arrangements for Stefan and Amanda to recreate the old photo. Stefan and Amanda are now happily married.

This photo makes us wonder. How many folks out there that have photographs of family at Fonthill then and now. If you do we would love to see them!

What Makes a House a Home?



TEN MEN BUILDING A WOOD FRAME HOUSE,

*William Henry Jackson, photographer. Omaha Reservation, Nebraska, 1877.
Courtesy The National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution.*

Throughout American history, people have lived in all sorts of places, from military barracks and two story colonials, to college dormitories and row-houses. From January 24 through March 15, 2015, the Mercer Museum is hosting the nationally touring traveling exhibit *House & Home*. Drawn from the flagship installation at The National Building Museum in Washington, DC, the exhibit embarks on a tour of houses both familiar and surprising, through past and present, to explore the varied history, and many cultural meanings of the American home.

House & Home encourages visitors to explore how our ideal of the perfect house and our experience of what it means to “be at home” have changed over time. The exhibit includes domestic furnishings and home construction materials, photographs, “please touch” interactive components, and films. Together, the objects and images illustrate how transformations in technology, government policy, and consumer culture have impacted American domestic life.

The exhibit also presents an overview of architecture styles and living patterns that have been featured in American homes over the years. Quotes, toys, and other graphic advertising materials

prompt visitors to think about the different ideas embodied in the words “house” and “home.” *House & Home* also showcases domestic objects—from cooking utensils to telephones—and traces how household goods tell the stories of our family traditions, heritage, and the activity of daily living.

Another key section explores how different laws, historic trends, and economic factors have impacted housing in America. The American Dream, once more generally seen as an aspiration to prosperity, grew in the 20th century to be synonymous with home ownership. Visitors learn about the economy of housing and how homes have been promoted and sold. Issues of housing inequality, land distribution, and the role of the government are examined, from the Colonial period through the Homestead Act and the creation of the Federal Housing Administration in the 1930s; and from the Oklahoma Land Rush to the subprime loan crisis. Related sections of *House & Home* looks outward, exploring the relationship of the individual house to the larger society by presenting examples of contemporary community development through film.

Video and film features immerse audiences in a nationwide tour of residential buildings and community

...continued on page 4

developments that reflect contemporary trends. From futuristic dormitories to post-Katrina communities built on shared interests in music, the images evoke the experience of residential space and illustrate the evolution and diversity of American domestic architecture, design, and community. In its scope, content, and presentation, the exhibit moves beyond the bricks and mortar to challenge our ideas about what it means to be at home in America.

House & Home has been made possible through NEH on the Road, a special initiative of the National Endowment for the Humanities. It has been adapted and is being toured by Mid-America Arts Alliance. *House & Home* was organized by the National Building Museum, Washington, D.C., and curated by Sarah Leavitt. Additional support was provided by the Home Depot Foundation. Local sponsors: Drexel Metals Inc., Raphael Architects, AIA Bucks County, *A Chapter of the American Institute of Architects*, Eiseman Construction, *Roofing and Exterior Renovation Contractors*, Happ Contractors Inc., and Tom Thomas.

Alongside the traveling exhibit, the



PLASTER DOOR CASTS AND BUTT HINGE.
Collected by Henry C. Mercer during his
"Dating of Old Houses" investigations, c. 1919.

Mercer Museum is displaying a selection of historical objects and images from its permanent collection that highlight Henry Mercer's interest in "old houses." Methods

of home construction have varied throughout history, depending on the local environment and the availability of labor and materials. Mercer chiefly studied structures in Bucks County and the nearby Delaware Valley, among them numerous houses built of log and stone. The display includes original study casts Mercer made of the corners of log cabins, portions of his nail and architectural hardware collections, and house-related images he pasted into scrapbooks for the Bucks County Historical Society.

Also on view in the museum's Great Hall, will be a sampling of tall case clocks from the collection. Included among them is a clock produced in the shop of Joseph Ellicott of Buckingham Township between 1755 and 1760, a bequest from the estate of Kenneth Gemmill in 2001.

A series of programs have been developed to accompany the *House & Home* exhibit, ranging from illustrated lectures focused on historical and contemporary architecture, to craft and other hands-on activities for youth and families. Check the museum's calendar of events for the full program schedule. ■



Hunter and the Snake Stoveplate, 1770.

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.

Of recent note, the Special Collections and University Archives of Rutgers University curated the major exhibition, *New Jersey before the Revolution: Land and People*, with a focus on the diversity of early inhabitants. This exhibit and special programming was in celebration of New Jersey's 350th anniversary as an established British Colony.

Illustrated by rare and unique manuscripts and objects, visitors were encouraged to place themselves in the context of the colonial period by examining the complexity of overcoming cultural and religious differences.

The Mercer Museum was proud to lend "The Hunter and the Snake" stoveplate, made in Burlington, New Jersey, 1770. This artifact represented the contributions of early German settlers.

For more information about this artifact, please visit our on-line catalog RolloPAC and keyword search "The Hunter and the Snake."

Set of Paint-decorated Chairs Among Recent Museum Acquisitions

In 1916, Henry Mercer donated a grouping of approximately 200 objects associated with George Nees, a mid-nineteenth century chair maker in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, to the Historical Society's museum. The artifacts included numerous hand tools, stencils, paints, patterns and parts from Nees' chair-making business. However, only one of Nees' chairs – in fair condition – was included in the gift.

Last year, the museum was delighted to receive a set of six chairs, each with Nees' stamp marking the undersides of each seat. The chairs, dating to about 1860 and in excellent condition, are representative of both Nees' work and mid-nineteenth century Pennsylvania chair making in general. They feature "tablet-top" crest rails, a solid back splat, and various painted floral designs and highlights over a reddish-brown ground. We are grateful to David B. Long for bringing these chairs to our attention, and for making them a gift to the museum.

At the time of Mercer's original gift in 1916, he attributed the various chair making tools and parts to Nees, suggesting that he worked in Manheim, Lancaster County. This information was apparently supplied by the antiques dealer from whom Mercer acquired the artifacts, D.B. Missemer of Manheim. However, a check of census records from the third quarter of the 1800s reveals the difficulty of attributing the tools and chairs to a particular individual with certainty. First, the surname, "Nees," can be found spelled any number of ways, ranging from "Neese" to "Niese" to "Nase." There are at least two "George" Nees (or Neese, Niese, Nies or Nase) who might possibly be the chair maker, though neither is identified specifically with that trade. One appears in the 1860 and 1880 censuses for Manheim, and is listed as a "painter." If this is the individual associated with the



LATE WINDSOR SIDE CHAIR.
*George Nees, Lancaster County,
Pennsylvania, c. 1860.
Gift of David B. Long.*



LATE WINDSOR SIDE CHAIR –
Detail of Maker's Stamp.

chairs and tools in the Mercer collection, it is possible that he self-identified more as a decorator than as a woodworker.

A second "George" might also be a candidate, though he did not apparently reside in Manheim. Rather, this George Nees seems to have moved around a bit in Lancaster County, from Elizabeth Township (1850), to Ephrata (1860), to Clay (1870-1880). In 1850 and 1860, his occupation is recorded as "carpenter," though by 1870 it is "farmer." In that same year, however, his son Samuel is recorded as "working in cabinet shop." More information and research is required to firmly connect Nees the chair maker with one of these individuals.

Several of Nees' tools (on loan from the Mercer Museum), along with several examples of his chairs, are currently on view in the visitors' center at the Landis Valley Farm Museum in Lancaster, part of an exhibit entitled, *Chairs, Chairs, Chairs! Handcrafted Traditions from Rural Pennsylvania, 1750-1875*.

In addition to the Nees chairs, David Long also donated a number of other items to the museum collection in 2014, including medicine bottles, sports medals, a needlework sampler, and a "Garfield and Arthur Club" campaign belt from the 1880 presidential election – all with local histories. Among Long's gifts to the museum, too, was a chest of drawers made by Robert Sellers, a Newtown, Bucks County cabinet maker, in 1813. The chest bears Sellers' stencil under one of the drawers.

We are also grateful for a number of other gifts to the collection, including a Bucks County album quilt and a buttonhole cutter (gifts of Roy and Nancy Kolb), an early 1900s concrete mixing trough (gift of James Clarkson), and a police uniform once belonging to Edward Stiles Naylor (1890-1973), a security officer at the Point Pleasant bridge (gift of Jeanne Dobron). ■

A Season for Fraktur

In 1997, the Mercer Museum presented a major exhibit featuring the Pennsylvania-German color drawings and decorated manuscripts known collectively as Fraktur. Though this folk art form was produced nearly everywhere German immigrants settled in America during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the museum's exhibit focused on those items of Fraktur created primarily in Bucks County.

This winter, in conjunction with other exhibits at the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Free Library of Philadelphia, the Mercer will mount a mini-exhibit featuring Fraktur pieces acquired or discovered by the museum since 1997. The exhibit, *Re-discovering Bucks County Fraktur: Recent Acquisitions*, will run from



BIRTH AND BAPTISMAL CERTIFICATE FOR JACOB ESCHBACH. *Johannes Moyer, Bucks County, 1798. Museum purchase, made possible by bequests from the estates of J. David Miller and George M. Hart, 2011.*

February 14 through April 12. The exhibits at the Philadelphia Museum of

Art and the Free Library will extend from February 1 through April 26, and March 2 through June 15, respectively.

The embellished manuscripts known as Fraktur were executed by schoolmasters, itinerant scribes, ministers, and others skilled with pen and brush. On view will be decorated birth and baptismal certificates, student penmanship models and copybooks, rewards of merit, devotional texts, bookplates, and more. Other Pennsylvania-German artifacts will also be displayed in the exhibit “nook” in the museum's Great Hall.

In conjunction with the exhibit, a special program has also been scheduled focused on Fraktur and family genealogy. Researcher, ...continued on page 11

When Mercer Celebrated Its 50th Anniversary

As the Mercer Museum approaches its centennial in 2016, it might be fun to look back to see how the institution celebrated its 50th anniversary. The year was 1966, some who had actually known Henry Mercer were still living, and a series of golden anniversary events were planned for that autumn.

Doylestown's *Daily Intelligencer* newspaper reported on all the anniversary festivities. On the evening of October 14, Historical Society members and their guests gathered to dine and dance at a formal ball held in the “festively decorated Elkins Auditorium” and the museum's “dramatic central court.” In Elkins, music was provided by Cliff Dunn and The Townsmen, while Sam Bocella and his Chordovox entertained in the museum proper. Some 160 members and guests were in attendance at the black-tie affair.

The next day saw the Historical Society's autumn meeting, with the “election” of 75 new members, the introduction of three new staff members –



GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY CELEBRANTS DANCE IN THE ELKINS AUDITORIUM. *Photo by James Barlow, Doylestown, 1966. From the Bucks County Historical Society Archives.*

including curator, Robert MacDonald and librarian, Cora Decker – and remarks by two of the Society's past presidents. A new portrait of Henry Mercer, by local artist J. Arnold Todd, was also presented to the membership. A buffet supper and a concert by the Bucks County Symphony Orchestra followed, with music “chosen especially for the occasion.”

That evening, the celebration moved outside to the grounds of the museum for

the golden anniversary's grand finale. On the west lawn, and against the backdrop of the museum building, the Historical Society presented a dramatic “sound and light show” for the general public. “The Story of the Mercer Museum in Sound and Light” featured spotlights, floodlights, recorded music, voice narration, projected images on several screens, and even “live action.” The cast for the “live” portion of the performance included Laura Swain, Mercer's former housekeeper and assistant, who portrayed herself.

Though it was a chilly night, some four hundred people attended the event, which climaxed with the appearance of “Dr. Mercer” himself, portrayed by Eric Dressler. Mercer (Dressler) arrived in a 1916 Ford Model T coupe, accompanied by “a young friend, a very young friend, and an assortment of tools.”

As the museum plans for its centennial celebration next year, we certainly hope to rival the excitement of the 1966 festivities! ■

Driving Mr. Harry

By Janine White

Visitors to Fonthill are sometimes surprised to learn that Henry Chapman Mercer never owned a car. He rode through Doylestown on his bicycle, took a taxi or traveled by train, and occasionally was driven around by employee Benjamin H. Barnes.

Benjamin - better known as Benny - was not a full-time chauffeur. He had been hired in 1910 to work at the Moravian Pottery and Tileworks, which was then located on the grounds of "Aldie," the Mercer estate. Benny had grown up on his family's farm on nearby Sandy Ridge Road, in Doylestown Township. In his memoir, he recalled how as a boy, he would see Mercer's brother William Jr. ride by on horseback, a dog trailing behind. Barnes said that later "Mr. Willie ... was one of the first to own an automobile in which he would drive past the farm. This was the first motor car I had ever seen."

At the pottery, Benny helped with tile production and also "hailed freight to the railroad station in a market wagon drawn by Uno, the horse." When Henry Mercer was preparing to move into his newly built home Fonthill, he called on Barnes to help. Although the bulk of the household furnishings were carted from Mercer's rental property "Linden" to Fonthill by other workers, it was Benny who transported the contents of the wine cellar, using Uno and the wagon. He said, "Dr. Mercer told me ... that he did not want the men to move the liquor as they would drink it. I assure you I did not have a drop. I was then a boy of seventeen years."

Following the completion of Fonthill and the construction of the new pottery close by, Mercer turned his efforts toward the new museum building of the Bucks County Historical Society, dedicated in June 1916. That year, Barnes had purchased his first auto, a Ford "touring car" which he used to drive Mercer to the dedication service. Over the next fourteen years, Benny would take many "jaunts through the



Photo of Benny Barnes. Date unknown.

Expenses on Car		Income on Car	
Forward \$160.87		Forward 207.65	
Tube Vulcanized	25	F.K.S. to Selmer	25
Spark Plug & Tune	30	Tube 32 x 3 1/2" Nat. Lat. 1.00	
6 Gal. Gas	1.44	Mr. Harry & Frank Trip	6.95
Sphometer fuel	35	" " " " "	8.45
Tube Vulcanized	25	F.K.S. to Selmer to town	1.00
Garage Rent in Phila	50	Mr. Harry & Frank Trip w/ 7.10	
6 Gal. Gas	1.44	Lodge to Fonthill	.59
Garage Rent	2.50	Farm School Trip to & from	1.00
Glass in Back Curtain	60	Andy Scho to & from	.50
2 Auto Wier & Hatching	25.74	2 Auto Licks to go Baker	1.30
5 Gal. Gas	1.20	Mail to Mrs. Catlett	.25
1 Oil Diff Grease	25	Mile after Kirsos. run to River	4.00
6 Gal. Gas	1.44	Long Branch Road to Cent.	2.50
Garage Rent	2.50	Mr. Harry, Frank & Mary trip	6.50
5 Gal. Gas	1.30	Antique to the West	1.25
5 Gal. Gas	1.30	F.K.S. to Selmer to town	1.00
Garage Rent	2.50	Mr. H. & Frank's trip to Sel	12.25
Motor cleaned etc.	4.30	5 Gal. Gas to go Baker	3.25
5 Gal. Gas	1.30	F.K.S. to Selmer to town	6.75
Garage rent in Phila	50	Herman to Beer Park	1.50

Barnes' ledger detailing expenses.

county" with his employer, up until Mercer's death in 1930.

Barnes described some of these excursions: "We would start out after the pottery closed at five-thirty or on Saturday or Sunday afternoons. Dr. Mercer always wanted the top down. He sat on a thick leather-covered cushion and a folded blanket, which raised him up quite high. He was a tall man and this gave him leg room."

"Many of the trips were to study old houses," said Barnes, adding that the search for old objects to fill the museum led them to seek out "collectors of junk."

While visiting an elderly woman who lived in an old log house on Haycock Mountain, Mercer was told by the poor lady that she didn't have enough money to eat. He then directed his driver to give her a five dollar bill, which Benny said

she greatly appreciated. According to Benny, Mercer usually did not carry money with him. "On the motor trips we would come home with a load of antiques for the museum. Sometimes they cost as much as fifty dollars. 'Ben, can you pay for these?' he would say. As I never had that much money on me, I found it easier to take his checkbook and a pen along and make out the check for him to sign."

During one such excursion out along Ridge Road near the Elephant Hotel, Benny found himself needing to fix a flat tire. Mercer viewed the speedy repair work of Barnes and declared, "Ben, you are the fastest man with your hands I ever saw. You must be hot, I'll treat you (it was a very hot day) - so stop at the Elephant and we will get a glass of beer." When the men had downed their drinks, Mercer turned and asked: "Ben, do you have a dime on you to pay for these?" As Benny noted

later, when writing up the trip, he added ten cents for two beers.

Benjamin Barnes was a serious car owner, keeping meticulous records of each automobile that he purchased, along with the costs associated with maintaining them. He also kept track in neatly penned ledgers of the numerous trips that were taken as he motored throughout town and countryside. Passengers included not only his boss "Mr. Harry," but also Frank Swain, Laura Long, friends, family members and customers of the tile business. Alongside their names, are the details of where they traveled and how much they contributed toward the cost of the trip. With Benny Barnes sitting proudly behind the wheel, they were surely all in for an exciting ride.

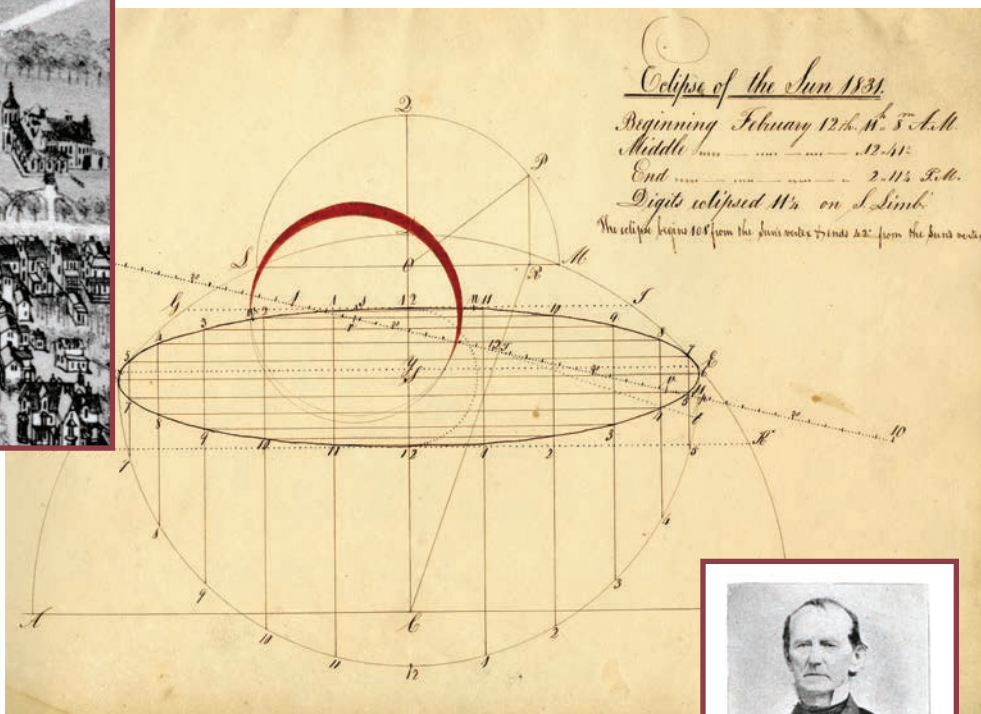
[Notes taken from "The Moravian Pottery: Memories of Forty-Six Years" by Benjamin H. Barnes, BCHS 1970]

History Highlight: Samuel Aaron (1800-1865)

By Jesse Crooks, Mercer Museum Library Volunteer



The Union Academy from the 1886 bird's eye view of Doylestown.



Samuel Aaron was a renowned teacher and orator who led a number of schools in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, but he came from humble beginnings. He was born to a farming family in New Britain in 1800, and was orphaned at the age of six. After the death of his father, he was sent to live with his uncle. According to family, the uncle "...was very cruel when intoxicated, and his little nephew would frequently hide in the barn to escape undeserved punishment, and wish that he could die." This mistreatment had a profound affect on him, and he became active in the temperance movement later in life.

Despite the difficulties he faced at home, Aaron excelled in school. When he received a small inheritance at the age of sixteen, he was encouraged to seek admission to the Union Academy in Doylestown, run by Reverend Uriah DuBois. The Academy would later become the site of the Doylestown High School. When looking back on this turning point in his life, Aaron recalled:

I have the most vivid remembrance of the interview; of my own rustic dress and appearance contrasted with his perfectly genteel form and bearing; how he fixed at first his black eyes upon me, sparkling through his genteel spectacles... In a few minutes he put me at my ease; made me feel I was more than a clumsy cipher in the human series, and strengthening the determination in my soul to be useful, virtuous, and intelligent. From that hour until his death, his kindness beamed upon me without variation or eclipse;

in spite of all that was weak and all that was wrong in my course, his affection was that of a father and a friend.

The Academy was a well-respected school, drawing students from various states and even the West Indies. Aaron's admission into the program turned his life around, and he became a star pupil. After a few years, he left Doylestown to attend Gummere Academy, an all boy's school in Burlington, New Jersey, where he also worked as a teacher while finishing his studies. However, he remained close to his mentor and friend, Reverend DuBois, and eventually married his daughter Emilia. In 1824, Aaron opened his own school in Bridge Point (now Edison) before taking over the Union Academy.

In addition to educating children, Aaron also encouraged intellectual development in the wider community. He was a founding member of Doylestown's Academy of Natural Sciences, which presented lectures on topics including botany, entomology, mineralogy, and electricity, and he also served as pastor of New Britain Baptist Church.

After leading Union Academy and New Britain Baptist for five years, Aaron left Doylestown for good, eventually settling in Norristown, where

he opened Treemount Seminary and also played an active role in the Underground Railroad. He dedicated much of his later life to the abolitionist cause, and took part in contentious public debates during the Civil War. He lived just long enough to hear the news of General Lee's surrender on April 9, 1865. Two days later, Aaron died peacefully in bed.

Within the archives of the Mercer Museum Library are two Astronomy Exercise Books created by Samuel Aaron. W.W.H. Davis, who studied under Aaron, called him "one of the most brilliant men our county has ever produced." These books contain intricate diagrams of solar eclipses and other astronomical phenomena, and provide valuable information about how science was taught in the nineteenth century.

As part of our ongoing effort to make collections more accessible to the online user, Samuel Aaron's Astronomy Exercise Books were recently added to our catalog "RolloPAC." To search for this and to peruse other library, archival and artifact collections, please visit mercermuseum.org and click on "Search the Collection." ■

Donations Support Mercer Robotics Camp



*Robotics Camp teacher,
Don Orcutt with a student.*

For more than twenty years, the Mercer has been the site of an innovative and forward-looking summer camp experience for youth. The museum's Lego™ Robotics Camps offer a fun, engaging setting in which kids, ages 7 to 14, learn to explore both mechanical and digital concepts. Though a concrete castle filled with obsolete tools may seem a strange place to consider the future of robotics, the museum's collection

provides much of the inspiration for camp projects and learning.

The Mercer Robotics experience begins with the "Basic Camp," where younger students are introduced to the fundamentals of computer language and programming, and build Lego devices inspired by the hand tools and machines found in the museum. They learn basic mechanical principles, and lay the foundation for further explorations at the intermediate and advanced levels of Camp. Along the way, campers learn to experiment, ask questions, solve problems, and exercise their imagination and creativity.

At the upper levels of Robotics Camp, kids build more complex devices, guided by icon-based computer programs. Then they put their robots to the test to discover whether they have successfully anticipated problems and developed effective solutions. Coupled with a heavy dose of persistence, the process of technological innovation is evident throughout the camp experience: imagining, hypothesizing, creating, experimenting and problem-solving. As campers practice these skills, they engage fully with the "STEM" disciplines: science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

With the camp's technology-driven curriculum, it is very important for the museum to stay current and provide up-to-date computers and educational kits to camp participants. Thanks to many generous contributions to the 2013 Cocktails at the Castle Mission Appeal, and to a major grant from Foundations Community Partnership, the Mercer has been able to add 14 new MacBook laptop computers, a similar number of new "Lego Mindstorms EV3" construction kits, updated software, and some necessary peripheral materials to the camp's teaching resources.

The museum is also taking steps to increase and broaden camp participation, hoping particularly to encourage more elementary and middle school age girls to take advantage of the STEM experiences that are so central to the camp curriculum. ■

Special Thanks To Our Generous Contributors...

Foundations Community Partnership

Susan E. Kane
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Marvin & DeeAnn Woodall
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2013 Cocktails at the Castle Gala

A Great Evening Benefiting Education, Conservation and Exhibitions!

Thank you for your support and participation in the Mercer Museum's third annual Cocktails at the Castle gala. The event was a wonderful success, raising over \$100,000 to support education programs for thousands of school children, conservation work to protect irreplaceable artifacts, and exhibitions to bring cultural experiences to our communities.

More than 350 guests enjoyed this year's event which once again showcased the Mercer Museum and all its wonder.

"It's a night to explore this remarkable treasure, enjoy delicious food, and share a passion for history and education with family, friends and longtime supporters," stated Brian McLeod, BCHS Trustee.

Keeping with tradition, our area's leading restaurants, wineries, breweries, bakeries and caterers provided their specialties for guests to sample and savor. From oyster shooters to empanadas, chocolate covered bacon to strawberry soup, beautifully designed cupcakes and decorated cakes to aromatic coffees and flavorful sangria—there was something for every foodie! The Silent Auction offered a varied selection of gifts and unique experiences, and our automated bidding added lots of excitement for guests vying to win their favorite items.

One of the featured components of the night was our Mission Appeal, which focused on our 2015 Firefighting Exhibition. A special area in the Marquee Tent was dedicated to highlighting artifacts in need of conservation for this much anticipated presentation. Guests learned that the Mercer Museum holds one of the nation's largest collections related to volunteer firefighting in Philadelphia.

It was a very special evening offering guests an extraordinary opportunity to explore, discover, learn, and truly make a difference.

Thank you to Our Cocktails at the Castles Sponsors. See page 10.

MEMBER SURVEY

We want to hear from you! As members, you play a valuable role in helping us achieve our mission and your feedback is important to us. Please participate in our electronically administered member survey when we reach out to you in early March 2015.

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and Catering
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Sweet Sisters Cupcake
Boutique
The Waterwheel Restaurant
Wegmans Food Markets
The Zen Den

Entertainment

Acoustic Madness
Jazz It Upright
Where's Pete?

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Balance Spa & Fitness
at Omni Philadelphia
Barrie Audio Video
Bergdorf Goodman, NYC
Black Bass Hotel
Blue Mountain
Guillermo Bosch, Esq.
Bountiful Acres
Landscaping & Nursery
Bradford Renaissance Portraits
Buchanan Ingersoll
& Rooney PC
Buckman's Ski Shop
Bucks Country Gardens
Bucks County Choral Society
Bucks County Library Center
Bucks County Playhouse
Buinewicz Plastic Surgery
and Medspa
Byers' Choice Ltd.

Capital Wine & Spirits
Maureen B. Carlton
Steven M. Case
CBS 3 & CW Philadelphia
Central Bucks High School
East Key Club
Central Bucks High School
West Key Club
Chaddsford Winery
Chapman Gallery-Doylestown
Chris' Cottage
Christine Taylor Collection
Christkindlmarkt Bethlehem
Classic Cigar Company
Georgie Coles
Comcast
Costco
County Theater
Cowgirl Chile Co. —
Laura Rutkowski
Creative Closets
CW Design
Doylestown Fire Company
Doylestown Floribunda
The Doylestown Inn
Dynamic Lighting
Eagles Peak Spring Water
Essentials Salon and
Day Spa of Doylestown
Alan Fetterman
Congressman Michael G.
Fitzpatrick
Frater's Electric
Francis D. Furguele, CRPC
Maria Goldberg
Gretz Beer Company
Grounds for Sculpture
Harry Kahn Neckwear
Lin Hodgdon
Kelly Ann Jacobson
James Gettys Hotel
Don F. Kaiser
Rosemarie Kaupp
Kramer Portraits
Jayne and Bob Lester
M Restaurant
State Senator Chuck McIlhinney
Mealey's Furniture
Memorable Affairs
Miacomet Golf Course
Mid-Atlantic Center
for the Arts & Humanities

With A Little Help From Our Friends



The Friends of the Bucks County Historical Society (BCHS) has been actively involved in planning engaging programs and activities to promote history education. The group's most recent bus trip visited Lancaster, PA, where guests enjoyed a tour of St. James Episcopal Church, to view the Mercer tile installation on the altar. The tiles were installed in 1916, followed by

an installation of Mercer floor tiles in 1927. Trip stops also included Lancaster's Central Market, the country's oldest continuing operating farmer's market, as well as Wheatland, the stately home of our nation's 15th President, James Buchanan.

The group's March 16th program, which is free to the public and presented in the Elkins Gallery, will feature Doylestown resident and Mercer Museum member, Curtis Cowgill, who will showcase a personal photo journey of his recent trip to Antarctica.

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

Betty Minnucci
Mo Better Entertainment
Mom's Flower Shoppe
Monmouth Museum
Morris Museum
Museum Apprentice Program
Students
Museum of Early Trades
& Crafts
Nantucket Historical Association
Natech Solutions LLC
Nejad Gallery Oriental Rug
Old Barracks Museum
Omni Hotel at Independence
Park
Orion's Light
Bill Patterson
PECO
Pennsylvania Academy
of the Fine Arts
Pennsylvania Shakespeare
Festival
Pennsylvania Soup
& Seafood House
Philadelphia Museum of Art
and Granite Hill Restaurant
Philadelphia Zoo
Running Press Book Publishers
Rutherford's Camera Shop
S&B Event Concepts
and Catering
Seibert & Rice
Sellersville Theater & Washington
House Restaurant
Shapiro-Amsler Family
Simon & Schuster
Dave Song
Spring Valley Nurseries
Sweet Sisters Cupcake
Boutique
Sweetwater Golf Course
Tabora Farm and Orchard
Dean F. Thomas
Rochelle and John Thompson
The Thompson Detail Center
Mr. and Mrs. H. Thorne
Tuckerton Seaport
The Walnut Street Theatre
Christopher Willett,
Lahaska Fine Art
William Penn Inn

A Season for Fraktur *continued from page 6*

author and family historian, Corinne Earnest, will present, "What You Always Wanted to Know about Fraktur, but Were Afraid to Ask," on Sunday March 22 at 2 p.m. Presented in collaboration with the Bucks County Genealogical Society, Earnest's illustrated talk explores the

various categories of Fraktur – including birth and baptismal certificates, bible records, and school-related manuscripts – and their function and importance within Pennsylvania-German families and communities. See the museum's calendar of events for more information. ■

Special Thanks to Our EITC Businesses For Their Support of Our National History Day And Mercer Apprentice Program Students

Fulton Bank



SnapCab
Elevator Interior Systems

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

Mercer Rainmakers are business members dedicated to supporting education, preservation and community enrichment. More than 125 businesses belong to our distinguished group of corporate citizens, providing a vital source of income and ambassador support for the Mercer Museum and Library & Fonthill Castle. We would like to welcome our newest Rainmakers:

Master Craftsmen
Drexel Metals Inc.

Craftsmen
Fred Beans
Family of
Dealerships
Glenmede

Guildsmen
Comcast
Origlio Beverage
Stockertown
Beverage

Artisans
Eiseman
Construction
Firsttrust Bank
Pine Run
Retirement
Community

Tradesmen
Adams-Bickel
Associates, LLC
Antheil Maslow
MacMinn LLP
Artistically Bakes
Bobby Simone's
Restaurant &
Bar

Cross Culture-
Fine Indian
Cuisine
Restaurant
& Catering
Doylestown
Brewing



Fonthill Mantel Original Appearance

Do you have a home where objects tend to stay put and never move for years? Or, perhaps your home is one where objects are constantly moving as you search for a better place to display or access something. At Fonthill, we like to think that most of the objects have always been where they currently are. We know that Henry Mercer seemed to be fond of the idea that objects have permanent locations. (At least, until he acquired more things and had to find a place for them!) Yet, through a variety of documents, we know that some of the artifacts in the Study have been moved around. Perhaps the largest movement of artifacts occurred when the Historical Society was preparing to open Fonthill as a historic house museum in 1975. At this time, many of the artifacts that were small, fragile or vulnerable were moved out of their original locations to more secure storage areas. At the time, in addition to documenting the move in the object files, there were also pictures taken of the rooms.

Recently, the staff at Fonthill reviewed the photographs from 1975, and saw how the mantel in the Study was previously populated with objects. In one regard, this was not a surprise. Henry Mercer was a collector after all. In a collector's mind, flat surfaces are for displaying things. But, what did this look like? Where are all of these objects? What are some of these objects? With these questions in mind, we decided to recreate the photograph and get a more accurate sense of how Henry Mercer decorated this important room.

Vance Koehler, Fonthill Guide and Volunteer, took on the task of researching and reconstructing what the Study mantel looked like in 1975. Using the black and



ABOVE: The mantel of the fireplace in the Study of Fonthill with the tiles and pottery reinstalled. Photo by Vance Koehler.

RIGHT: This closer view of the left side of the mantel shows us a couple of ceramic ink stands. The Chinese one r75 was Mercer's from his time at Harvard. The green inkstand r77 is from Morocco. Peeking out from behind the Moroccan inkstand is object r157, one experimental pottery vases.



white photograph of the study, Mercer's 1930 estate inventory and his catalog entitled "Collection of Objects at Fonthill," Koehler was able to reconstruct and document how this space may have looked. All of this hard work resulted in a series of delightful photographs that tell us a bit more about Mercer's use of color, and the objects he found interesting.

If you look at the right side of the mantel, you will notice many of the taller vessels are from Mercer's designs. However, most of them were produced by Mercer as the result of experiments he did for Randal McIver. At McIver's request, Mercer was trying to determine how certain old civilizations achieved the

particular colors on their pottery without a glaze. It is interesting to note that the results of these experiments were displayed across the room from the original ancient pottery.

Unfortunately, once Fonthill staff photographed the reinstalled mantel, the objects were returned to storage due to the fact that some of Mercer's vessels tend to be top heavy and prone to tipping over. Perhaps, one day, we will find a means of displaying the objects in their original location again, yet be able to keep them safe for future generations. At the very least, we now have some color photographs to remind us of how Henry Mercer used this flat surface. ■

Be a Judge for National History Day!

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

This year's Bucks and



Montgomery Counties Regional Competition will take place on Saturday, March 28 at Ursinus College in

Collegeville, PA. Students in grades 6 through 12 compete, as an individual or in a group, in five categories: Exhibits, Documentaries, Websites, Performances, and Historical Papers. The theme for this year's competition is Leadership and Legacy in History. Our History Day program is supported by our Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) sponsors Fulton Bank, Hatboro Federal

Savings, and Newman & Company, Inc. History Day has also been supported by the iPromise Charitable Giving Fund from Volpe-Koenig P.C. Intellectual Property Law.

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

Save The Date...

2015 Mercer Legacy Sweepstakes Drawing Party

Sunday, May 3, 4-6 p.m. • Fonthill Castle

Purchase an entry in our 2015 Mercer Legacy Sweepstakes and you could win a brand new BMW 320i or \$20,000 cash! Sponsored by Thompson BMW and Monument Bank. To enter, call Eileen Shapiro, 215-345-0210 ext. 132 or visit www.mercermuseum.org



Letter from James A. Michener

Editor's note: James Michener wrote this letter to officially convey the comments he made at a ceremony in Doylestown celebrating "the Mercer Mile" in the summer of 1972.

Denver, Colorado
17 October 1972

It is proper that we should meet today to pay our respects to the most notable creative talent that Doylestown has so far produced.

Henry Mercer was a distinguished man, gifted both in the handling of materials and in the use of ideas. I feel sure that when his remarkable constructions in this town are more widely known, he will be recognized as an authentic natural genius in architecture, comparable to Gaudi, the fantastic architect of Barcelona, and Rodia, who erected those wild towers in Watts. Perhaps I am prejudiced, but to me it seems that Henry Mercer had a stability of character and a relationship to the long traditions of architecture which Gaudi and Rodia lacked.

I am extremely proud of what Henry Mercer accomplished in our town. Not only are his three buildings architectural gems worthy of study and preservation as rare historical documents, but contents of the third building, the historical society, are unique in our cultural history. We do right to honor this extraordinary man, and I look forward to the day when some scholar takes the time and has the insight to produce a book on Mercer which can circulate through the learned circles of the world. Then his fame will spread to other areas in addition to his home town.

I remember Henry Mercer from the earliest days of my childhood. In fact, I grew up right across from his first castle and he was a familiar sight to me as he left his quarters early in the morning on his bicycle, his ferocious-looking dog Rollo running behind. In those days Dr. Mercer wore expensive Scottish tweed knickerbockers, fastened with garters just below his knee. He wore heavy shoes of the best British quality, and a tweed jacket.

Each morning he pedaled what we now honor as The Mercer Mile, speaking to almost no one, a man severely alone. We must have passed each other a thousand times and not once did he nod or take any cognizance of me, or of any other child. Henry Mercer was not the kind of man to waste his time with children, or indeed with anyone who could not keep up with him mentally. His eyes were focused on extremely far horizons of art, of philosophy, of history, of our cultural heritage.

He was a rare man and he accomplished rare things. We are all indebted to him for bringing fame and attention to our little town. Whatever he did made our community better, and no man could have a finer accolade.

Log House Repairs



EAST FAÇADE OF MERCER LOG HOUSE.
Wood siding was added to this side of the structure last year in an effort to prevent further decay of the building's logs.

Early homes built of logs were often intended as temporary structures. Both logs and the chinking between them required diligent care and maintenance to prevent rot and decay. It is remarkable that many log homes constructed in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries do still survive. Some have been preserved because homeowners chose to "update" them at some point after their original construction, often in an attempt to conceal their crude external appearance. Adding clapboard siding to an early log house was a common method for a homeowner to present a more "refined" appearance, as well as to better protect his property from the elements.

The Mercer Museum's log house, built in the mid-1990s to replace a structure that had been destroyed by fire, is now about twenty years old and shows some signs of wear. With this in mind, the museum has opted for a solution chosen by many earlier log house dwellers – add clapboard siding. Though clapboarding will not cover the entire structure, it has been added to the east gable wall of the house where deterioration of the log "crib" has been a significant problem. Though the wood siding appears quite new at present, it will eventually weather and be less noticeable.

The siding work was performed by Fredendall Construction of Doylestown, and was supported in part by a grant from the Rotary Club of Doylestown. ■

Fire in the City!

The sound of ringing fire bells terrified urban-dwellers throughout the 1800s. Before the Civil War, huge fires destroyed more than \$200 million worth of property in the nation's largest cities. Although Philadelphia did not suffer a devastating conflagration like those that nearly destroyed Boston and Chicago, the city often saw terrible blazes. Two broken and deformed soda bottles in the Mercer Museum's collection offer mute testimony to the destructive effects of one of these "terrible conflagrations."

On July 9, 1850, a fire erupted at 39 North Water Street in Philadelphia and spread quickly to the Vine Street Wharf on the Delaware River. Many Philadelphians actually prepared to evacuate the city after a series of huge explosions rocked the area, scattering debris over several city blocks. The blaze was apparently sparked by friction from a hoisting apparatus used by workmen of John Brock and Company to move barrels of molasses. The fire soon ignited gunpowder and saltpeter stored nearby, resulting in the explosions. Following these blasts, the fire quickly spread across a one square mile area between Front and Callowhill Streets, eventually destroying more than 300 homes and commercial buildings. Though statistics vary, one source suggests that as many as 28 people were killed and 100 injured. Several people were actually blown into the Delaware River while others were crushed by falling walls and debris.

In an era before the establishment of a professional city-wide fire department, protecting a city's residents from this sort of calamity was an important and highly regarded act of voluntary public service. Many of the city's volunteer fire companies responded to the Vine Street blaze, rushing to the scene with their hand engines and hose carts. They were able to eventually bring the fire under control by 2 a.m. the following morning. A number of volunteer firemen – perhaps as many as ten – were killed while battling the flames.

One of the buildings destroyed in what became known as "The Great Conflagration of 1850," was a soda bottling business owned and operated by William



SODA BOTTLE. William Heiss, Philadelphia, 1840s. Melted and twisted in the "Great Conflagration of 1850." Gift of the Volunteer Firemen's Association of Philadelphia, 1919.

Heiss at 213 North 2nd Street. Heiss, a copper-smith, took advantage of the craze for bottled mineral water that emerged in the 1840s, and went into the bottling business as a sideline. After the 1850 fire destroyed his factory, he moved the business to another location, but never quite recovered. In 1852, Heiss posted newspaper notices offering his equipment and store of bottles for sale. Of the two soda bottles in the Mercer collection that were damaged in the fire, the Heiss bottle is in the worse condition – evidence of the intense heat and destruction that accompanied the Vine Street Wharf fire.

The two soda bottles, along with numerous other artifacts and artwork related to the history of volunteer firefighting in Philadelphia, will be on display this spring and summer in a new Mercer Museum exhibit, *To Save Our Fellow Citizens: Volunteer Firefighting, 1800-1875*. The exhibit focuses on the experiences of volunteers in the city of Philadelphia as the city grew and expanded over the course of the nineteenth century. The volunteer firefighters were eventually replaced by a paid department in 1871, and



LITHOGRAPH: THE GREAT CONFLAGRATION IN PHILADELPHIA ON TUESDAY JULY 9TH 1850. Charles G. Rosenberg (artist), G.E. Leefe (lithographer), Philadelphia and New York City, 1850. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.



FIRE BUCKET OF SAMUEL CRAWFORD & CO., RELIEF ENGINE COMPANY. Philadelphia, Pa., 1800-1850. Gift of the Volunteer Firemen's Association of Philadelphia.

in 1875, the Volunteer Firemen's Association of Philadelphia was formed — a group dedicated to commemorating the service of the earlier fire companies. It was this organization that eventually donated its entire collection of artifacts and memorabilia to the Mercer Museum in 1919.

In addition to original artifacts and a wealth of archival material, the museum's firefighting exhibit will also include a variety of hands-on activities for families and youth. A number of special programs are being planned, and a companion exhibit will feature historical images of some of Bucks County's early volunteer fire companies. The exhibit will open Saturday, April 25, and run through September 7.

To Save Our Fellow Citizens: Volunteer Firefighting, 1800-1875 is sponsored by: Visit Bucks County, Tilley Family & Tilley Fire Equipment Company, *In Memory of Don Tilley's Commitment to Volunteer Firefighting*, William R. & Laurie R. Schutt, Bucks County Foundation, Susan E. Kane, Brian & Louise McLeod, Adopt An Artifact Campaign Contributors, and Mission Appeal Donors-2014 Cocktails at the Castle Gala. ■

Collections Grants Awarded to Mercer Museum & Fonthill Castle



AFRICAN COLLECTION STORAGE, Mercer Museum. *The materials in these boxes, and numerous other artifacts and artwork, will be re-located from rooms in the original Mercer castle to the more stable environment of the museum's off-site Collections Storage and Study Center.*



MORAVIAN TILE INSTALLATION, Fonthill Museum. *A grant from the National Trust will enable Fonthill to develop a plan and conduct some test restoration and replacement strategies for original tile installations like the one in this image.*

The Mercer Museum and Fonthill Castle are pleased to announce that they have been awarded several grants to support the care and conservation of their collections and historic interiors.

The Mercer Museum has been awarded a grant of \$74,236 by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), a federal agency, to relocate and re-house three important collections representing the diverse holdings of the institution. These collections include paintings, historical medical instruments, and tools and cultural objects from West Africa. Currently housed in the museum's original exhibition buildings, and inaccessible to regular visitors, the collections will be moved to more stable environmental conditions in the Historical Society's off-site storage facility. The project will include the acquisition of new storage furniture, digital photography and condition assessment of the re-located artworks and artifacts, and updated catalog information, which will be made available via "RolloPAC," the museum's on-line catalog database.

The IMLS award is one of 211 grants announced last fall by the agency. Funds totaling \$25,576,662 will support museum projects across the country. These grants are made through IMLS' highly-competitive Museums for America and National Leadership for Museums

programs. The Institute of Museum and Library Services is the primary source of federal support for the nation's 123,000 libraries and 35,000 museums. Its mission is to inspire libraries and museums to advance innovation, lifelong learning, and cultural and civic engagement. Through grant making, policy development, and research, IMLS helps libraries and museums deliver valuable services that make it possible for communities and individuals to thrive.

A second grant of \$5,150, provided by the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Cynthia Woods Mitchell Fund for Historic Interiors, will support a project at Fonthill Castle to investigate methods of stabilizing and restoring original Moravian Tile installations. The project will include photography and condition assessments of interior tiles, development of techniques for restoring and replacing endangered or lost tiles, and several prototype treatments. Techniques and treatments will be evaluated for success, and recommendations for future tile conservation treatments put forward.

Grants from the National Trust Preservation Funds range from about \$2,500 to \$5,000 and have provided over \$15 million since 2003. These matching grants are awarded to nonprofit organizations and public agencies across the country to support wide-ranging

activities including consultant services for rehabilitating buildings, technical assistance for tourism that promotes historic resources, and the development of materials for education and outreach campaigns.

In addition to these grants, the Mercer Museum and Fonthill Castle have also been selected to participate in the Philadelphia Stewardship Program, coordinated by the Center for Art and Historic Artifacts (CCAHA). At Mercer, CCAHA staff will assist the institution with the development of a comprehensive disaster plan, designed to protect and manage collections in an emergency. And, at Fonthill Castle, CCAHA will work with collections staff to conduct a preservation needs assessment, a step toward updating the museum's collections care and conservation plan. As these projects are completed, the two museums will receive a total of \$5,000 in grant funds which will enable the purchase of disaster preparedness supplies at Mercer and the implementation of a priority collections care project at Fonthill. Generously supported by the William Penn Foundation, the Philadelphia Stewardship Program assists non-profit collecting institutions in the Philadelphia region achieve their preservation and conservation goals. ■

Enhancing Access

We are thankful to the Richard C. Von Hess Foundation, Jim and Kathy Morrison, John and Ann Lear and the Norman Raab Foundation for providing vital funds for the Mercer Museum Research Library. With the tremendous support from these special contributors, we will implement much needed technology upgrades and improvements aimed at providing researchers enhanced access to our collections.

Our Library serves more than 2,000 users each year, both on-site and via various distance services (research by mail, telephone and e-mail queries). Our facility houses over 20,000 books, periodicals and pamphlets, more than 800 distinct manuscript collections (plus some 1600 bound manuscripts), and over 12,000 images, maps and other graphical materials. The Library also serves as a repository for many governmental records, dating back as early as 1683, on deposit from the County of Bucks. The



various collections document not only local history, but also early American technology, culture and folk art, and illuminate the life of museum founder Henry Chapman Mercer (1856-1930). "RolloPAC" is the online catalog of the

Mercer Museum Library, providing access to information about library (and museum) collections. These vital grant funds will enable us to: (1) acquire a new digital microfilm reader and establish a microfilm workstation, (2) complete the cataloging of our 19th and early 20th century postcard collection, and (3) establish a patron computer workstation that provides internet access capabilities as well as access to "RolloPAC."

"The support from these wonderful foundations and individuals further positions the Library as a key resource center," stated Sara Good, BCHS Collections Manager and Archivist. "Technology advancements play a major role in providing researchers with more options and broader access and we must remain at the forefront of delivering these services."

The upgrades and improvements are underway and slated for completion by April 2015. ■

That's What the Heck It Is!



A 19th century warming pot!

Typically used when nursing the sick, it conveniently kept food warm while being safely close at hand. A small lamp was lit and placed inside the cylinder, closing the door would contain the heat. The larger cup had a small amount of water and slide snugly into the top, resting on the rim. The smaller cup was put inside the larger cup – creating a double boiler. And those two "wings" are actually vents!

For more information about this object, visit our online catalog RolloPAC and keyword search "Food Warmer" or enter the accession 09171.A-E.

Mercer Program Volunteer Opportunities

There is little question that friendly, helpful and enthusiastic staff help to make a trip to the Mercer Museum a great experience for visitors. While our reception staff does a great job of greeting and launching visitors on their journey through the Mercer castle and exhibits, we would like to offer additional encounters with friendly faces throughout the museum.

With this in mind, the museum is always looking for adult volunteers who can assist with special programs, serve as gallery guides or explainers, or present demonstrations and "try-its" at our "Expeditions Cart." Many of these opportunities are occasional, connected with particular exhibits or programs as needed or as they arise. What they all have in common is a job description focused on interacting with the public, and maximizing visitors' enjoyment and engagement with the museum and its collections.

Volunteers are currently needed in the following areas related to programs and exhibits:

Gallery Guide/Explainer (Occasional or regular schedule): Greets visitors, monitors galleries, answers questions and facilitates experiences with temporary and permanent exhibits. May also lead Mercer "Expedition Cart" presentations, demonstrations and try-its. Should enjoy interacting with the public, and be willing to study and learn content.

Public Programs (Occasional): Assists with a variety of educational programs and special events throughout the year on a flexible, as needed basis. Programs include Dolls' Day Out, Holiday Open House, Mercer by Moonlight, Summer Camps, and weekend arts & crafts activities. Should enjoy interacting with the public, and working with children.

Anyone interested in learning more, or applying for a volunteer position, is invited to contact Frances Boffa at 215-345-0210 x110, or e-mail fboffa@mercermuseum.org. Volunteer opportunities in other areas of our museums may also be available. Please feel free to inquire. ■

BCHS Adopts New Strategic Plan

At its October meeting the BCHS Board of Trustees adopted a new Strategic Plan for the organization covering the period 2015 – 2018. The Plan was developed over a seven month period in 2014 and involved both internal and external constituents. The Strategic Plan builds on many substantial studies and assessments completed in previous years. The Plan also builds on our experience with operating the new Mercer wing over three years. BCHS Board Chair, William Maeglin, commented on the process. “The planning process was coordinated by our new Visioning Committee of the Board. Over several months, Board and staff engaged in small group discussions to determine the priorities of the organization across all facilities. It was a thorough and rewarding process, and I believe the end result will serve the organization well over the next four years.”

Historical Society is a dynamic, educational organization that operates the Mercer Museum and Library, and Fonthill Castle. The organization involves its visitors in meaningful explorations of the past through active engagement with its dramatic buildings and historical collections. We encourage our visitors to view history from multiple perspectives and multiple disciplines, and in relation to their own lives. The organization recognizes that it must offer innovative



Board planning session at Fonthill's Terrace Pavilion. From l to r: Heather Cevalco; Laura Biersmith, VP Development; Dave Franke; Susan Fisher.

and participatory experiences in order to involve diverse segments of local, regional and national audiences. Our museums and library strive to offer the most exciting, engaging and unique history experiences in the Delaware Valley. The organization pledges its commitment to the highest ethical and professional standards.

The extensive Plan document outlines many objectives and strategies for the

Mercer Museum & Library and Fonthill Castle over the period 2015 - 2018. Specifically, within the period of the plan, the BCHS will complete a master plan for the Fonthill Castle site and all other BCHS properties; present a range of temporary exhibits at the Mercer Museum to provide a sense of change and excitement; and solidify fiscal support by establishing an exhibition fund and growing the endowment. In addition, we will celebrate the Mercer Museum Centennial in 2016 and use the occasion as a catalyst for widespread attention on the museum and the Mercer legacy.

The Summary of the 2015 – 2018 Strategic Plan can be found on our website www.mercermuseum.org.

As part of the planning process the Board reviewed and revised the organization's Mission and Vision statements as follows: The extensive Plan documents

Mission

It is the mission of the Bucks County Historical Society to educate and engage its many audiences in appreciating the past and to help people find stories and meanings relevant to their lives — both today and in the future.

Vision

Inspired by the vision and creativity of Henry C. Mercer (1856-1930), the Bucks County ■

Save the Date for Dolls' Day Out!



Happy Guests at the 2014 Dolls' Day Out!

This year's annual Dolls' Day Out event will be held at the Mercer Museum on Saturday, March 7.

The day includes a doll tea and fashion show, craft activity, storytelling, open hearth cooking and more. Tickets are now on sale. The cost is \$15 per person (\$12 for members). Ask about our special group rate. Reserve your space early — this popular event tends to sell out!



The One Investment With A Return That Makes History!

A charitable Gift Annuity with the Bucks County Historical Society in one of the most rewarding investments you can make. This gift planning tool provides you with guaranteed, fixed annuity payments for your lifetime with future support benefiting history education for school children.

Consider your planned giving options and make history today. To inform us of a planned gift or to learn more about planned giving opportunities, please call Laura Biersmith in our development department, 215-345-0210 ext. 129.

One Hundred Years of the Mercer Museum, 1915-2015

In this article, we continue to follow the Mercer Museum's construction, rapidly progressing one hundred years ago this winter. Construction activity in the fall of 1914, resulted in the completion of the original museum library. At that point, Mercer reported that the entire cost of the building project had amounted to \$13,700 to date.

Cold weather in the winter of 1915 caused Mercer and his workmen to move inside and focus on some of the smaller details necessary to the building's completion. This included the casting of concrete window sashes. In an entry in his construction notebook dated February 27, 1915, Mercer wrote that the "cement windows are all done today – about 300 of them." The windows were cast on the ground in plaster molds, with clay and wooden inserts to achieve the appearance he desired. Eventually, the sashes were raised into position in each window opening, and mortared into place.

Mercer noted, too, that his workmen were busy over the winter producing both stationary and "portable" bookshelves for the library and archives rooms. Of course, Mercer's bookshelves were also of concrete, dedicated as he was to ensuring that few combustible materials – like wood – were used in his new museum. For the four-sided portable bookshelves, he developed a special mold using both an



HCM DATE MOULD WITH HAND PRINT.
Mercer Museum, 1914.

inner and outer form, a design he sketched and labeled in his notebook. The shelves were reinforced with "wire farm fence" to give them more strength.

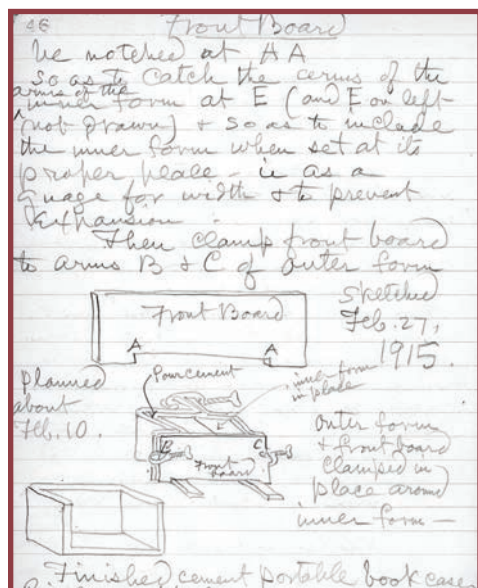
Proud of his process for casting both window sashes and shelves, Mercer noted that only one bookcase was ruined in extracting it from its form, and just one window was broken "trying to

pull it out of ice" — evidently on a very cold winter day.

With the coming of spring, Mercer again turned his attention to the building's exterior, as the walls of the museum rose nearly to their finished height. In his notebook, he recorded that his gasoline-powered concrete mixer was "running well," and workers were going through about forty bags of cement each day. By May 19, the roof over the center portion of the building was "nearly cast."

Digressing at first to note that local cherries "were not ripe yet," Mercer then spent several entries in June describing the casting of dormers, the completion of "Rollo's Stairs," finishing of the steps to the "stove room," and the construction of chimneys in the east gable. Finally, he noted that the "date mould [was] set in the wall of the SW room." There are actually three locations where Mercer's handprint and date appear on the building – two on the exterior and one in an interior room. It is not clear which spot Mercer referred to as the "southwest" room, but his decision to apply the date, "1915," to his structure that summer meant that the museum was getting very close to completion.

As we continue to celebrate the museum's centennial, future issues of this newsletter will chronicle the building's progress through the remainder of 1915 and into 1916. ■



DESIGN OF FORM FOR CASTING PORTABLE BOOKSHELF. Henry C. Mercer, "Notebook for the First Plans of New Museum for the Historical Society of Bucks County," 1910-1916.



MERCER MUSEUM UNDER CONSTRUCTION. Photo by Geneva Clay, 1915. With no leaves on the trees, and only some of the concrete windows raised into place, this image was likely taken in the late winter, 1915.

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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.

Mercer Museum & Fonthill Castle 2015 Winter-Spring Calendar of Event

Exhibits at the Mercer Museum: Martin & Warwick Foundation Galleries

House & Home

January 24 – March 15

Re-Discovering Bucks County Fraktur: Recent Acquisitions

February 14 – April 1

House & Home Programming

**Green Houses, Homes and
Headquarters: A Regional Showcase**
Saturday, January 31, 1 p.m.

**A Tale of Two Suburbs:
The Battle for the Future of
Suburbia in Bucks County's
Levittown and Concord Park**
Sunday, February 22, 2 p.m.

Youth Program: Lenape Home Life
Saturday, February 28, 12:30-2 p.m.

**Renovate, Re-model, Re-construct:
Local Home Makeovers**
Saturday, March 14, 1 p.m.

More Mercer Programs

African-American History Month Program: Searching for the Life of Harriet Hemings

Sunday, February 8, 2 p.m.

Villanova University scholar, Catherine
Kerrison, traces the childhood and
travels of Harriet Hemings, believed to
be one of the offspring of Thomas
Jefferson and his slave Sally Hemings.
In collaboration with the African-
American Museum of Bucks County.

Foodways of Lincoln's Time

Monday, February 16, Noon – 4 p.m.
Mercer Museum Log House

20th Annual Dolls' Day Out

Saturday, March 7,
10:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
\$15/\$12 members. Groups of ten
or more, \$13 per ticket.

A Photo Tour of Antarctica: Friends of the BCHS Quarterly Meeting

Monday, March 16, 12:30 p.m.

**Genealogy Program: What You
Always Wanted to Know About
Fraktur, but Were Afraid to Ask**
Sunday, March 22, 2-3:30 p.m.

Programs at Fonthill

Tower Tour for Families

Saturdays: Feb. 7 & March 7

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

\$12 adults/ \$6 youth;

\$7 member adults/\$3 member youth

Mustache Monday

Monday, February 16, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Behind the Scenes Tours

Saturday, March 28

6:30-9 p.m.

\$15/\$12 members

Save The Date...2015 Mercer Legacy Sweepstakes Drawing Party

Sunday, May 3, 4-6 p.m.

Grounds of Fonthill Castle

\$100 per entry

www.mercermuseum.org

Summer Internship Program

We are currently accepting applications for our Summer Internship Program. Are you a college student looking for a unique and educational experience? The Mercer Museum & Fonthill Castle internship program is intended for students who value the importance of preserving the past and sharing this passion by engaging and educating the community. Applications can be found on our website and should be submitted via email to Sara Good, sgood@mercermuseum.org, or by mail. The deadline is April 1.



**MERCER
MUSEUM
& FONTHILL
CASTLE**

84 S. Pine Street
Doylestown, PA 18901

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

Mercer Museum and Fonthill Castle...

**Unique Sites for your
Major Event, Business Meeting,
and/or Special Gathering**



With exclusive caterer, Memorable Affairs planning your culinary selections, your event will surely be one to remember. To learn more about entertaining at the Mercer Museum, contact Eileen Shapiro, Special Events Coordinator at eshapiro@mercermuseum.org or 215-345-0210, ext 132. For events at Fonthill Castle, contact Edward Reidell, Site Administrator at ereidell@fonthillmuseum.org or 215-348-9461.

What the Heck is it?



Well, let's figure it out together by looking at each part...

It's made out of metal – tin, I think

Is that a door? – perhaps to see inside its core?

Those handles are quite wide – I wonder the reason why?

Look at the sides – do you see those things? No, they are definitely not wings!

The top looks like it should have a cover – maybe to keep something warm, like butter?

Put these clues together and whad'ya got?

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