

The Power of



Bucks County Historical Society 2017 Annual Report





Mercer Museum's iconic Central Court



Fonthill Castle's extraordinary Yellow Room stairway

Photos by Kevin Crawford

# A MESSAGE

## *from the Board Chairman and the President*

**Community.** It's the driving force that propels all the programs and services the Mercer Museum and Fonthill Castle provide year round.

Every day, staff members open the doors to these remarkable sites to welcome guests, members, supporters, and volunteers. Each individual arrives with a strong desire to explore, to learn, and to discover. For many who provide valued support, their involvement and commitment make it possible for the Bucks County Historical Society (BCHS) to offer a variety of unique experiences and enriching services. In 2017, these included:

- Education services for nearly 8,000 schoolchildren.
- Changing exhibitions that present unique experiences for visitors of all ages, from all walks of life, and with diverse interests.
- Annual gatherings like Fonthill's Old Fashioned Fourth of July and Mercer's Holiday Open House.
- Opportunities to explore unique artifacts and unparalleled collections that tell the stories of the past and of those who came before us.
- Access to the Mercer Research Library for scholars, genealogists and inquisitive minds.
- Lectures and special programs on myriad subjects through first person interpretations and active learning opportunities.
- Guest services for nearly 65,000 visitors annually who explore and discover the castles.

This report proudly reflects the scope of offerings, and the broad support the community provides to advance the BCHS mission and vision. It is an honor to serve this remarkable organization and to work side by side with an extraordinary group of individuals who are making a difference every day.



John R. Augenblick  
Board Chairman



Kyle McKoy  
President & Executive Director

## OUR MISSION...

*To educate and engage our many audiences in appreciating the past and to help people find stories and meanings relevant to their lives – both today and in the future.*



# MERCER MUSEUM AND LIBRARY

## Programs and Exhibitions

The Mercer Museum sponsors an array of programs annually for general audiences, including children, youth, and adults. On- and off-site children-focused learning experiences include our popular LEGO™ Robotics and “Wild World of Wizarding” summer camps, the long-running Dolls’ Day Out, the Bucks-Mont Regional History Day competition for middle and high school students, and “Log House Life” for very young children. For adult and general audiences, the museum presents programs in conjunction with African-American History Month, Presidents’ Day, the Halloween season, and the December holidays, plus special tours, workshops and storytelling performances.



Wizarding camp participants

2017 continued with programs for special exhibitions in the Martin & Warwick Foundation Galleries with three traveling shows, plus the annual seasonal display, *Under the Tree*. The winter months featured Gather Up the Fragments, a fascinating look at the world of Shaker decorative arts and the collecting couple – Faith and Edward Deming Andrews – who brought the Shaker aesthetic to the attention of the wider world. Over the summer, the museum hosted *The Mary Schafer Collection: A Legacy of Quilt History*, exploring the life and work of an important early collector, designer, maker, and popularizer of quilts and quilting traditions. Rounding out the year was the family-centered exhibit, *Centuries of Childhood*, presenting a series of immersive environments for children to explore, each filled with replica artifacts, dress and settings from different periods in American history.



Guests enjoy featured quilts at the Mary Schafer Collection exhibit and accompanying display of Sharon Holloway's Dollhouse and Miniatures Collection.

A number of special programs accompanied the exhibits, including lectures and craft demonstrations, Shaker basket-making and quilting workshops, and story reading sessions for children. In conjunction with *Centuries of Childhood*, a special artist-in-residency after-school program brought children to the museum to develop their own stories about the past, inspired by visits to the exhibit, exploration of the Mercer castle and objects in the collections.

The museum's core exhibits and collections were also enhanced in 2017. Exhibits staff added new “Track It – Touch-It – Try-It” interactive stations for children, and upgraded scenic elements, hands-on materials and lighting to the popular *Animals on the Loose* exhibit. Finally, the museum's evocative Central Court served as the setting for a second year of evening storytelling performances tied to the museum's history and collections.

### 2017 Highlights:

- Nearly 5,000 school children, ranging from pre-school to high school, experienced Mercer Museum programs such as “Log House Life,” “Simple Machines,” “Frontier Trading,” and “Henry's Harvest of Art.”
- More than 170 children participated in the Mercer's summer camps, featuring Robotics and “Wild World of Wizarding.”
- Over 320 middle and high school students competed in the Mercer Museum-sponsored regional History Day competition at Ursinus College.
- The second annual “Wizarding for Adults” program, based on the popular youth camp, brought more than 60 participants to the museum for an evening of special “classes,” table-top Quidditch, a costume contest, and of course some potent potions.
- Three “Twilight Tales” programs attracted over 100 guests who enjoyed each evening's combination of original and traditional stories, inspired by the museum and its collections.

Bucks-Mont Regional History Day First Place Winners –  
CB West H.S. Senior Group – Website Design



# MERCER MUSEUM AND LIBRARY

## Collections

The collections of the Mercer Museum and Library portray three broad aspects of the past: (1) Bucks County history and culture up to the present day, (2) the history of everyday life and work in pre industrial America, to circa 1850, and (3) the contributions and achievements of Henry Chapman Mercer – archaeologist, collector, architect, tile maker and museum founder.

The continued stewardship of the collections is a primary responsibility of the Museum and Historical Society, and an important task for both curatorial and library staff. Stewardship involves the care and preservation of collections, as well as improving documentation and providing access to collections information for researchers and other users – both on- and off-site. In 2017, nearly 700 researchers visited the Mercer Library, while approximately the same number received answers to queries by mail, telephone and e-mail.

Ongoing stewardship activities include maintenance of historic structures, processing and cataloging collections, photographic documentation, housekeeping, inventory maintenance, and environmental monitoring of collections spaces. Many new acquisitions are received annually, and must be accessioned and entered into the institution's database. Researchers may gain access to information about a portion of the museum and library collections through the BCHS website, utilizing the "RolloPAC" on-line catalog portal. Staff added more than 1,500 additional images to RolloPAC, continuing to enhance the catalog's value as a visual reference. Special projects included improving protective coverings and cleaning of the extensive book collections at Fonthill; conducting a condition assessment of Fonthill's Moravian tile floors, with recommendations for ongoing care; and producing a new disaster preparedness and response plan, and building systems manual for the Mercer Museum.



**Candle Mold**, J. Walker, Livonia, New York, c. 1840.  
Gift of the Estate of Mattiemae Silverman, 2017

### 2017 Highlights

- Accessioned and cataloged 320 new acquisitions into the museum and library collections.
- Received a grant from Philadelphia's Conservation Center for Art and Artifacts to develop a new disaster preparedness plan for Fonthill Castle.
- Saw more than 40,000 individual searches performed by outside researchers using the museum's RolloPAC on-line catalog portal.
- Implemented repairs and improvements to the museum's Log House, with funds raised from the Cocktails at the Castle Mission Appeal.
- Extended loans from the Mercer Museum collections to exhibits at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Winterthur Museum and Glencairn Museum.

**Cadette Girl Scout Uniform**, worn by Barbara Rowe, Yardley, Bucks County, c. 1970. Gift of Cape Fear Museum of History and Science, 2017.



**Country Road Near Solebury** by W. L. Lathrop, gift of Albert Duveen, 1966. Loaned to the 2017 exhibit, *American Watercolor in the Age of Homer and Sargent*, Philadelphia Museum of Art.





# FONTHILL CASTLE

## Programs

In 2017, Fonthill Castle continued its long tradition of sharing the story of Henry Mercer and his artistic achievements through a wide variety of tours and programs for many guests. In addition to the regular and school tours led through the castle, exploration opportunities also included Tower Tours for Families, Behind the Scenes Tours, Candlelight Tours, and Mercer's Night Tales. With the extraordinary involvement of valued volunteers, a range of interactive youth programs were presented which included Magical Mercer Tours, Medieval Sampler programs, and sketching and photo workshops for the community's high school art and ceramic students. The workshops culminated with corresponding exhibits of the students' creative works.

Fonthill also presented a varied selection of non-tour programs. These programs and events included the Holiday Meander, The Holiday Family Open House—in conjunction with the Moravian Pottery and Tile Works, Stories by the Castle with Darcy Fair, and the



Volunteer serves guest at sold out Beer Fest

Fonthill Castle Beer Fest. Several Plein Air painting sessions and photography workshops were held throughout the year on the beautiful grounds.

Fonthill worked in partnership with the Friends of the Bucks County Historical Society to present the Second Annual Kite Day celebration, which drew over 200 participants. An alliance with the Village Improvement Association (VIA) resulted in a special Homes for the Holidays tour, showcasing both Fonthill and the James Lorah Memorial House for guests to explore. Advancing the tradition of collaborations, staff worked with a local Venturing Crew to complete beautification and clean-up efforts of Fonthill's reflection pool area.



Fonthill's reflection pond after completed clean up

In response to the changing ways people are consuming digital imagery, Fonthill began to allow interior photography during regular tours. This policy change has been very popular with visitors, and has enhanced the visitor experience.

Beyond programs and events, vital preservation and restoration efforts continued. Staff began work to update Fonthill's Risk Assessment Plan. As part of an ongoing Conservation Center for Art & Historic Artifacts (CCAHA) preservation assessment, Fonthill was awarded a \$2,500 matching grant to create and implement a maintenance and housekeeping plan for the castle's historic tile floors. Additionally, weekly cleaning and care of artifacts throughout the home was expanded to include monitoring humidity and temperature changes.

### 2017 Highlights:

- Fonthill's annual Old-Fashioned Fourth of July Celebration drew nearly 3,000 attendees, making it one of the most successful in the event's history.
- Nearly 28,000 guests participated in tours, programs and events at Fonthill Castle.
- Fonthill's first Smithsonian Free Day resulted in more than 350 guests visiting the castle.



Youngsters enjoy kite flying

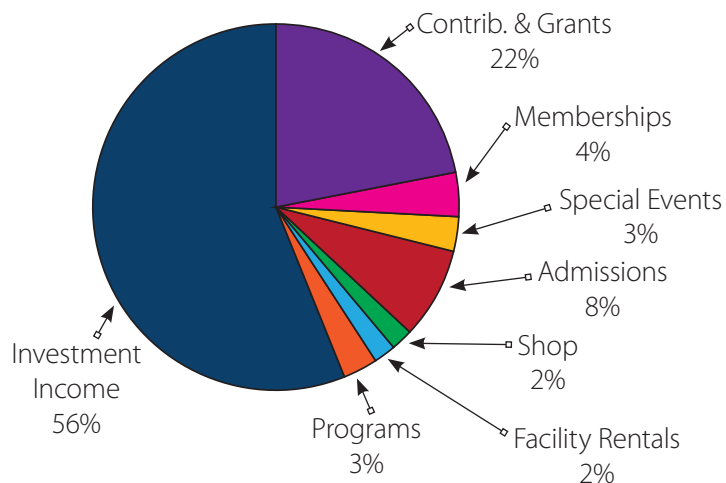
# FINANCIAL REPORT

## Statement of Financial Position

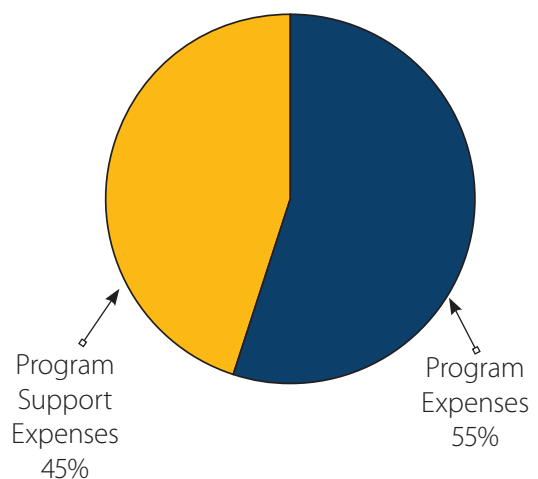
Statement of Activities: Years ended December 31, 2017 and 2016

	2017	2016
<b>SUPPORT AND REVENUE:</b>		
Grants and Contributions	\$642,119	\$681,095
Memberships	100,552	108,375
Special events		
Society Activities (Net of Direct Costs of 2017 \$81,456; 2016 \$122,131)	92,491	142,474
Museum operations:		
Admissions	242,974	302,142
Programs	92,238	95,370
Museum shop, net of expenses (2017 \$37,979; 2016 \$36,282)	26,064	28,738
Publications, Net of Expenses (2017 \$1,802; 2016 \$2,123)	2,435	2,885
Facilities rental	33,960	35,950
Miscellaneous income	5,862	9,725
Investment income:		
Trust fund income	12,500	11,999
Investment income	1,612,191	659,647
	2,863,386	2,078,400
<b>EXPENSES:</b>		
Program Services:		
Library	243,183	256,961
Curatorial	699,523	809,079
Educational	328,866	353,987
Support Services:		
Management and general	466,003	409,894
Development and fundraising	595,265	581,211
	2,332,840	2,411,132
Adjustment of Actuarial Liability for Annuities Payable	–	–
Change in net assets	530,546	(332,732)
Net assets, beginning of year	23,106,637	23,439,369
Net assets, end of year	\$23,637,183	\$23,106,637

2017 Revenue



2017 Expenses



# OUR 2017 DONORS AND CONTRIBUTORS...

Making All We Do Possible through their generosity.

## PLUS ULTRA SOCIETY

*Demonstrating an extraordinary expression of devotion, these individuals ensure the future of our organization by including the Bucks County Historical Society in their estate plans.*

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Young explorers enjoy Centuries of Childhood exhibit

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Henry Mercer, portrayed by C. Jameson Bradley, with Cocktails at the Castle guest

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We apologize for any misspellings or omissions

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