

# CASTLE CHRONICLES

NEWSLETTER OF THE BUCKS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



WINTER 2019

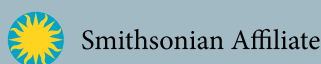


MERCER  
MUSEUM  
& FONTHILL  
CASTLE



Smithsonian Affiliate

VOL. 33 NUMBER 1



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### GENERAL INFORMATION

Visit our website at [mercermuseum.org](http://mercermuseum.org)

#### MERCER MUSEUM & MUSEUM SHOP

84 South Pine Street,  
Doylestown, PA 18901-4930  
Phone: 215-345-0210  
Hours: Monday – Saturday, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.  
Sunday, noon – 5 p.m.

Research Library Hours:  
Tuesday – Thursday 1 p.m. – 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  
Hours: Monday – Saturday, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.  
Sunday, noon – 5 p.m.  
Guided tours only. Reservations required.

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

### ON THE COVER

The Feasterville General Store  
The counter, shelving, bins and other woodwork  
from the “Merrick & Lennon” Store were acquired  
and installed in the Mercer Museum in 1961. The  
original store, which operated from about 1825  
to 1957, stood at the corner of Street Road and  
Bustleton Pike in Feasterville, Bucks County.  
Last fall, BCHS members selected this cover  
image through an online voting contest.

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## 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.

# WITH A FOCUS ON COMMUNITY

We have a new name and new look! Welcome to the debut issue of *Castle Chronicles*, the newly named BCHS newsletter. It was exciting to watch this naming contest unfold. Nearly 90 individuals participated in the 3-month process, including staff, trustees and volunteers. Fifty-five names were suggested and the list was winnowed down to five finalists. Using Survey Monkey, participants voted and *Castle Chronicles* received 63% of the vote.

Including our stakeholders in the newsletter naming contest is just one example of how we can all come together in our community. As I look around our sites, and gauge program participation, I see an increase in people getting involved with BCHS. The impact our community is having is inspiring, and we are all so grateful.

People are embracing the Fonthill Woodlands project. To date, more than 120 volunteers have participated in cleanup and beatification days around the grounds. Work is nearing completion on the Fonthill Welcome Center (Terrace Pavilion), thanks in large part to a very generous couple—who wish to remain anonymous—Happ Contractors, and architect Mike Raphael. Once completed, the Welcome Center will allow us to open up the first floor of Fonthill Castle for visitors to truly experience the beautiful setting Henry Mercer designed as his home.

The Little House in the Woods façade will receive proper cleaning and graffiti removal, thanks to the expert services provided by Hatfield-based ESCA Blast. Owner and president Jeff Paduano has agreed to donate his company's time and products to help the house with a face lift.

At both Fonthill and Mercer, Bucks Beautiful planted 5,000 daffodil bulbs per site, bringing beautiful yellow smiles to the grounds come Spring.

The gardens and curbside appeal of the two Doylestown Cultural District signs, located on Mercer Museum grounds, are being cared for by our wonderful neighbors. On Green Street and Scout Way, Trustee Gus Perea and his wife, Cathy, have volunteered to weed, prune and beautify the area. At the corner of Ashland and Pine, Helen Duffner, Jean Weston and Pat Tagliolini (pictured l to r), have not only designed the garden scheme but also volunteered to maintain the welcoming corner.

Neighbors helping neighbors...that is what community is all about.

Kyle McKoy  
President & Executive Director



# MERCER MUSEUM TO HOST WORLD WAR II-ERA EXHIBIT

On February 2 the Mercer Museum will open a new exhibit: *Manufacturing Victory: The Arsenal of Democracy*. The exhibit is presented by national touring sponsor HP, with additional support provided by Citi. Produced by The National WWII Museum, the exhibit follows the industrial journey that took the United States from a nation perilously unprepared for war to a global superpower that led the Allies to victory in World War II.

During the war, a sense of civic duty and responsibility united the nation and fueled America's war effort. American citizens stepped forward to fulfill the jobs demanded of them, and they excelled beyond all expectations. But the U.S. mobilization on the home front actually began before the country was officially involved in the conflict.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt addressed the nation on December 29, 1940—a year before Pearl Harbor—declaring, “We must be the great arsenal of democracy. For us, this is an emergency as serious as war itself. We must apply ourselves to our task with the same resolution, the same sense of urgency, the same spirit of patriotism and sacrifice as we would show were we at war.”

Roosevelt gave the arsenal concept a democratic meaning that saw every man and woman as a vital partner in the war effort regardless of where they worked. United by the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Americans in factories, farms and businesses worked with ingenuity and spirit to create an unprecedented arsenal of military resources to overwhelm our enemies.

Manufacturing Victory, a 1500 sq. ft. exhibit, includes compelling artifacts, photographs, oral histories and interactive audio-video components that immerse the visitor in the story of America's mighty industrial war engine. The exhibit debuted at The National WWII Museum in 2014, before embarking on a national tour to expand access and educational opportunities across the country.

In addition to the traveling exhibit, the Mercer Museum will feature a related display of images and artifacts associated with some of Bucks County's own wartime industries. A sampling of other World War II-era items from the Museum's collections, portraying the local home front and belonging to those who served during the War, also will be view. This year, 2019, will mark the 75th anniversary of D-Day, as well as a number of other major turning points of World War II.



**Speedex Wire Stripper, Rockford, Illinois, c. 1940.** Used by wartime worker Virginia Knight to wire “Buffalo” and “Corsair” aircraft at the Brewster Aeronautical Corporation's plant at Johnsville, Bucks County. Museum purchase, BCHS Collections Committee Fund, 2014.



Bucks County Historical Society members will be invited to a special preview of the exhibit, scheduled for the evening of February 1 at 5:30 p.m. *Manufacturing Victory: The Arsenal of Democracy* will be on display through May 5. See artifacts and images from the nationally-traveling exhibit and learn more about America's arsenal of democracy at [manufacturing-victory.org](http://manufacturing-victory.org).

Special thanks to local sponsors Syd and Sharon Martin, and the Biersmith Family for their generous support.

**Chrysler's Detroit Arsenal Tank Plant, Detroit, Michigan, 1940s.** Image courtesy of the National Automotive History Collection, Detroit Public Library.

# JOHNNY RIVERS, 1917-1942

Stories of American heroism during World War II are legion. Prominent among the tales is the story of a Bucks County athlete turned U.S. Marine—Quakertown's Johnny Rivers.

Born in 1917 of mixed race parentage, Rivers was orphaned in Philadelphia as a young child. Later adopted at the age of fourteen by a family in Applebachsville, Bucks County, he spent his teen years attending high school in Quakertown. There he became a star athlete, playing football on the Quakertown High squad. Graduating in 1937, he moved with his foster brother to Philadelphia where he took up boxing—first as an amateur and later a professional.

Before America's entry into World War II, Rivers sought to join the Marines. In his first attempt, however, he was disappointed—failing a physical, apparently due to "flat feet." After Pearl Harbor he tried again. This time the Marines accepted his enlistment and Rivers headed off for basic training. Before leaving for the war's Pacific Theater, the newly-minted Marine was photographed in his uniform in front of his foster parents' home in Haycock Township (see photo).

In August, 1942, Rivers landed with other Marines on Guadalcanal, in the Solomon Islands. The American objective was to deny use of the Islands to the Japanese, and establish a base to attack other Imperial Army strongholds in the Pacific. Early in the morning of August 21, while serving a machine gun post with two other Marines, the group was attacked by successive waves of Japanese infantry crossing the Ilu River. Continuously feeding belts of ammunition and battling tenaciously, the small group of Marines managed to repulse the attack—in spite of their .30 caliber gun's water-cooled jacket being riddled with bullets. Midway through the fight, Rivers was killed instantly. Shortly after, his comrades received serious wounds but continued to battle.

For his gallantry in combat, Rivers was awarded posthumously the Navy Cross on March 18, 1943. This was followed in June by the Purple Heart, conveyed "for military merit and for wounds received in action resulting in his death, August 21, 1942." The surviving members of Rivers' squad also received Navy Crosses. The group's heroism was portrayed later in the 1945 film, *Pride of the Marines*.

Rivers' remains were eventually interred at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Hawaii. His foster parents in Haycock, Mr. and Mrs. Elvin Horne, received his Purple Heart, which along with other memorabilia was later donated to the Historical Society's collection. Rivers' Purple Heart will be on view this winter, along with other World War II Era artifacts, in conjunction with the traveling exhibit, *Manufacturing Victory*, opening February 1.

**PFC Johnny Rivers in Marine Uniform.**  
Applebachsville, Haycock Twp., Bucks County, 1942.  
*Gift of Willard Fluck, 1999.*



**Purple Heart of Johnny Rivers.**

Awarded  
June 18, 1943.  
*Gift of Willard  
Fluck, 1999.*



# RECENT ACQUISITIONS

As demonstrated by our hosting of the exhibit, *Manufacturing Victory*, this winter, the Mercer Museum and Bucks County Historical Society are as interested in presenting the history of the 20th-century. Over the past several decades, the Museum and Library has acquired numerous objects, images and documents related to the County's history in the last one hundred years—including the history of the World War II Era.

Among the World War II materials in the BCHS's collection are uniforms worn by local soldiers and nurses, dog tags, ration books, Selective Service records, bond drive broadsides, Civil Defense helmets and armbands, items associated with local war industries, and even a captured Japanese carbine brought home by a returning soldier. The Purple Heart of Quakertown marine Johnny Rivers is also in our holdings (see related article). Many of these objects will be exhibited in conjunction with *Manufacturing Victory* when the show opens in February.

Recently, the Historical Society received a gift of some additional World War II items. Charles Yeske of Doylestown presented the Museum with a pair of binoculars and a duffle bag, as well as photographs and other memorabilia that had belonged to his uncle, Adolph Yeske. The latter used the objects while serving with the Army Air Force's 312th Bombardment Group in Japan, China, New Guinea, the Western Pacific, the Southern Philippines, Luzon, and Australia. Born in Philadelphia in 1913, Adolph Yeske later relocated with his family to a farm near New Hope, Bucks County. After the war he entered the ministry, and embarked on a career of service to inner city missions and church camps.



**Adolph Yeske with Wife, Dorothy at Doylestown Station.**  
Leaving for his induction into the armed services, July 9, 1942.  
*Gift of Charles Yeske, 2018.*



**World War II Binoculars of Adolph Yeske, Bausch & Lomb Optical Co., Rochester, New York, 1940s.**  
*Gift of Charles Yeske, 2018.*



In addition to the Yeske items, other objects added recently to the museum collections include a 1940 wedding gown and accessories, made and worn by Catherine Fullam Meyers of Gardenville, Bucks County (gift of Mary K. Segal); sailing trophies Peace Valley (gift of Davis and Phyllis Carroll); a doll, doll clothes and doll suitcase—playthings of the donor in the 1950s-60s (gift of Jeanne Dobron); late 19th-century hat block, made by Edward Anderson of Philadelphia (gift of Alisa McCann); Bucks County Courthouse Centennial and Doylestown Old Home Week pin, 1912 (museum purchase); and a wooden-tined "automatic" lawn rake, used in Washington Crossing, Bucks County, home, c. 1920 (gift of Richard B. Ernest).

**Wedding Gown of Catherine Fullam Meyers, Gardenville, Bucks County, 1940.**  
*Gift of Mary K. Segal, 2018.*

# HENRY C. MERCER AND THE IRISH CONNECTION

The name Henry C. Mercer has been vaguely known to a limited number of Irish academics and scholars of traditional Irish music of the modern era. This awareness largely arose from his preserved correspondence with one of the iconic collectors and publishers of traditional Irish music, Francis O'Neill (1848 – 1936).

O'Neill left his native west County Cork as a teenager and lived a life of adventure which would easily have made for a Hollywood film. He rose to become the first non-native chief of police in a major American city, Chicago. He privately published two major texts and four extensive tune collections which have since held the status of defining the canon of traditional Irish music.

The link between O'Neill and Mercer shows a number of key parallels. Both were men of achievement. Each held a deep attraction for traditional music and while Francis' chosen instrument was the timber flute and Henry's the fiddle, both were passionate about Ireland's unique instrument, the Irish or Uilleann\* Pipes. Both were utterly enchanted by the playing of Patsy Touhey, the revered dynamo of uilleann piping and the instruments of Billy and Charlie Taylor, who brought their revolutionary pipe making skills from their native Drogheda, County Louth to Philadelphia.

On December 8th, 1885 Henry C. Mercer was standing at the corner of East State Street and North Main Street, Doylestown when he heard strains of music on a form of pipes unfamiliar to him. Upon investigating the source he met John Egan and Patsy Touhey, natives of County Galway, Ireland. By Henry Mercer's own accounts this was a meeting which would change his life forever.

He discovered from the two that Billy Taylor was making pipes in nearby Philadelphia and he sought him out. Egan, Touhey, Taylor and Mercer remained lasting friends. Henry Mercer's fascination later led him to contact Francis O'Neill and a series of correspondence began in which ideas about tune origins, aspects of the tradition and the transmission of tunes were discussed. Much, if not all, of this original correspondence was preserved in Mercer's private papers. Ultimately, Henry Mercer was able procure a full, rare set of Taylor pipes as well as the collection of tools from the Taylors' workshop for the museum.

The recent coming to light of the full extent of the Henry C. Mercer collection of material of Irish traditional music interest is causing a stir amongst researchers on the subject in both Ireland and America. The correspondence is opening a window on the challenges of publishing faced by Francis O'Neill, new biographical information on some of the most revered players of the music dating from the period just prior to, and the earliest years of, sound recording. The set of Taylor pipes contain reeds from the golden period of concert pitch making. These are the engine of the sound production and appear to be somewhat different from those made today.

Modern uilleann pipes manufacture is often done by persons with precision engineering backgrounds and tolerances. Vintage instruments are measured and even x-rayed to try and uncover the specifications used by the masters such as the Taylors. Amongst artefacts in the Mercer Museum are the original tools used by the master craftsman.

There is no doubting that as planned research collaborations between traditional Irish music scholars and the very kind and dedicated staff of the Mercer Museum proceed, a revision of important aspects of the history of that tradition will emerge. Again, this is entirely due to the preserving acts of Henry C. Mercer and the staff of the Mercer Museum.



**Uilleann Pipes.** This rare set of pipes, made by pipemaker William Taylor at his shop in Philadelphia, were purchased by Henry Mercer in 1928. Mercer had a lifelong interest in Irish music, and his correspondence with Irish music publisher Francis O'Neill is still of interest to researchers.

# A MOBILE GUIDE TO BUCKS COUNTY'S COVERED BRIDGES

Bucks County is rightly proud of its twelve surviving covered bridges (including some that have been re-built). From Schofield Ford in the south, to Knecht's in the north, the spans stand as picturesque reminders of the county's agrarian and pre-industrial past. Ten of the twelve are still in regular road service. But those that remain are only a fraction of the more than fifty bridges that once carried traffic over local streambeds, and even across the Delaware River. These engineering marvels enabled essential commerce between local farms and mills, and allowed products to travel efficiently by road to Philadelphia, and to adjoining counties and states.

In fact, Bucks County was one of the early centers of covered bridge construction in the United States. The county claims the second such span ever built in this country (the first was in Philadelphia), a bridge across the Delaware connecting Morrisville to Trenton in 1806. Others would follow, including at least ten more crossing the Delaware at various points. While many bridges were the victims of natural disasters over the course of the 1800s and early 1900s, more were lost to demolition following the state's takeover of some local highways in 1919. The loss of so many bridges, coupled with the growing public perception of the covered bridge as an American icon, eventually led to preservation efforts in the 1930s—efforts that continue to this day.

Now, a new web-based, mobile-friendly application offers a comprehensive guide to the county's bridges—both those that survive and those that have been lost to time. Developed by Arizona State University graduate student Scott Bomboy, the site is the product of his work toward a Master's Degree in History. Using Curatescape, an open source framework that allows small- and medium-sized historical organizations to publish location-based content, Bomboy has populated the Bucks County Bridges site with stories and information based on his extensive research. It includes the locations and history of individual bridges, as well as more contextual information about their origin and construction. The site also features a rich array of visual images, the majority of which are drawn from the collections of the Mercer Museum's own research library.



**Uhlerstown-Frenchtown Bridge.** Partially destroyed in a 1903 flood, two sections of this bridge on the New Jersey side of the Delaware River were replaced by steel spans. The remainder of the bridge was replaced with steel truss elements in 1931, though the original piers still remain under the current bridge structure. From a postcard photo (SC-36-44).



**Cabin Run Bridge.** Built c. 1871, this bridge spans the Cabin Run waterway, which empties into Tohickon Creek. Nearby is the Stover-Myers grist mill, active until 1955. Taken in 1937, the photo is from the George Hart Collection (SC-29-32).

# METALS ARTISTS TO 'FORGE A LINK'

In October, the Mercer Museum kicked off an innovative project to foster greater artistic engagement with the museum's collections. The project aims to develop a creative and experimental collaboration with a community of artists, and result in a novel exhibit of their work in the fall of this year. The exhibit, set within the original core of the Mercer Museum, will offer visitors a new way of experiencing the collections, and highlight those collections as sources of inspiration for contemporary artists.

Guest curating the exhibit is Cappy Counard, Associate Professor of Metals and Jewelry at Edinboro University in northwestern Pennsylvania. She has invited a roster of twenty-three jewelers, metalsmiths and blacksmiths—many also with academic backgrounds—to participate in the project. Each is at different points in their careers, with work ranging in scale and medium, from traditional to contemporary, formal to conceptual. In order to facilitate access to the museum and its collections, the artists selected reside within relatively easy traveling distance to Doylestown.

The museum hosted an initial gathering of the artists in late October, which included a reception, tours of the museum and off-site storage, and an opportunity to explore the collections in some depth. The artists also were invited to return as often as they wished for additional looking and exploration. During the winter months they will be developing their work in response to what they have seen of the collections and the museum's architecture, with submissions for the fall, 2019 exhibit to follow during the summer months. A catalog for the show will also be developed.

More information about the project and exhibit will be available in the next issue of our newsletter. It is hoped that the success of this initiative will lead to future collaborations with artists working in other media, and who wish to be challenged by the museum's collections, history, and evocative atmosphere.

Special thanks to exhibit sponsors, Tom Thomas and Dontech, for providing the initial support to begin this exciting project.



(Above) Metal artist Jera Lodge in the Kitchen Room

(Right) Artists explore Central Court



# KEEPING THE LEGACY ALIVE

There is no question the Mercer Museum, a component of the Bucks County Historical Society, is a hidden treasure of Bucks County, and particularly of Doylestown. Since the museum's opening in 1916, the collection of rare artifacts and objects has continued to grow, enriching our community and the surrounding region.

It is not clear whether Henry Chapman Mercer intended to create a legacy that would endure for several generations, or if he wanted to preserve and educate the community for hundreds of years. We do know that his legacy has lasted for more than 100 years and he bequeathed the bulk of his estate to the Bucks County Historical Society. As a result of his insight and generosity, we are able to study, touch, learn and enjoy one of the best collections of artifacts in the world. At the museum opening in 1916, the *Bristol Daily Courier* called the Collections in the museum "the finest in America."

The Mercer Museum welcomes visitors from around the world to study and learn from the collections, and we are privileged enough to have this extraordinary collection in our backyards. A number of years ago I travelled to Roswell, NM to visit a friend and, of course, we had to visit the UFO Museum. While there, we met a couple who had just returned from Doylestown to visit the Mercer Museum. The couple shared at length how real and enriching the experience of visiting Doylestown and the surrounding museums was for them. It was gratifying to know our hometown museum had made such an impact.

When I moved to Doylestown over 35 years ago, I must confess that visiting castles was not a priority; sledding down the hill during snow storms on the castle grounds was much more exciting. It was not until I had an opportunity to view the collections, for no additional charge, after purchasing a ticket for the Folk Festival that I began to develop an interest in the Historical Society. I quickly learned that in addition to the exceptional collection of artifacts, the special exhibits and educational programs presented by volunteers and staff were more than a learning experience, but a participatory adventure for the entire family.

As an attorney specializing in Wills and Estate Planning, I know how important it is to support charitable organizations and institutions. I regularly ask my Wills and Estate clients if they would like to make a charitable gift or bequest. Many respond they have never thought about it, but will consider it and get back to me. In most cases, however, clients choose to include charitable recipients, with many serving people or animals. While we understand the importance of gifts to people and animals, and commend everyone who makes a charitable donation, I believe strongly that learning and preserving our history is essential to our growth in the community and the country at large. In fact, I have made a specific bequest to benefit the Bucks County Historical Society in my own Last Will and Testament.



Melissa V. Bond, Esq. – Wills and Estate Planning Attorney

# LOAN PROGRAM

The Mercer Museum has had an active loan program since the early 1990s. We enjoy working with researchers and museum colleagues as they develop exhibits at distant institutions. Sharing our collections with others enhances our understanding of our own holdings, and their historical and cultural significance. Below is a recap of where artifacts from the Mercer Museum are traveling this year.

**Landis Valley Farm Museum**, located in Lancaster County, is developing two very important “redware” exhibits exploring the work of Eastern Pennsylvania potters. We are happy to have several pieces in both shows, including an Andrew Headman Sgraffito-decorated dish (1808) and a late 18th century pie plate (by an unidentified potter). Projected exhibition dates are March 2019 through December 2020.



**Sgraffito-decorated Earthenware Dish**, Andrew Headman (d. 1830), Richland or Rockhill Townships, Bucks County, 1808. Gift of Susan Gerstein, 1897.

**Sgraffito-decorated Plate**, Unidentified potter, Bucks or Montgomery Counties, 1780-1820. Gift of Irene Meredith, 1918.



A collection that may be unfamiliar to some of our readers is the African Collection. These items of “everyday life” were collected by Dr. Amandus Johnson (under the direction of Henry Mercer) during a research and discovery trip to Angola, Africa in 1922-1924. The objects were later purchased by Henry Mercer. In the early 2000s



scholars from the **Jamestown Yorktown Foundation** studied the collection and identified several objects which they requested for their expanded exhibition gallery. These artifacts were representative of the material culture brought to the Jamestown Colony by the first African slaves. Our dialogue has continued, and once again the Foundation will be borrowing several objects for their newest exhibit, “Tenacity: Women in Jamestown and Early Virginia” (November 2018 – January 2020).



(Above) **Reed Sieve**, West Africa, c. 1900. Gift of Henry C. Mercer, 1923.

**Antelope Horn Container**, West Africa, c. 1900. Gift of Henry C. Mercer, 1923.

## ONGOING LOANS:

Dr. William Edgar Geil’s typewriter is on extended loan to the **Doylestown Historical Society**. Geil was a man of many talents and famous for being the first American to travel the entire length of the Ming section of the Great Wall of China.

**National Building Museum**, Washington D.C., borrowed several objects for their long-term “House and Home” exhibit, including a fruit dryer and a cornhusk broom.



**Typewriter of William Edgar Geil**, Blickensderfer Co., Stamford, Connecticut, c. 1905. Gift of Doris Hart Carr, 2001.

The **Milwaukee Art Museum**, Wisconsin, in collaboration with the **Chipstone Foundation**, researched and organized “The Art of the Carver in Eighteenth-Century America.” The exhibit identifies previously undocumented furniture carvers, and compares American and European carving techniques and advancements. On extended loan is a ca. 1770 wooden stoveplate pattern attributed to John Pollard, and several iron stoveplates.

# MERCER MUSEUM TO HOST 2019 NATIONAL HISTORY DAY REGIONAL COMPETITION AT DELAWARE VALLEY UNIVERSITY

The Bucks County Historical Society is pleased to announce that the 2019 National History Day regional competition for Bucks and Montgomery Counties will take place on Saturday, March 30, 2019 in its new location at Delaware Valley University in Doylestown, PA.

National History Day is an annual academic enrichment program for students in grades 6-12 that encourages thoughtful historical research, project-based learning, and a dose of friendly competition.

The Mercer Museum has coordinated the regional contest since 1996, encouraging Bucks and Montgomery County high school and middle school students to take their love of history beyond the classroom. This new community partnership with Delaware Valley University, and new location for the regional contest, is an exciting development for this legacy program run by the Mercer Museum's education department.

Partnering with Delaware Valley University will provide fresh perspective and support for student participants, families and attendees on competition day, and it is expected that over 250 students from Bucks and Montgomery counties will participate in this regional event. Delaware Valley University faculty and alumni will serve as judges, assistants and volunteers throughout the program, offering critical support to Mercer Museum staff.

Founded in 1974 at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio, the National History Day Contest was created to inspire students to conduct original historical research. The contest has grown into an international competition that has impacted millions of students and teachers. Guided by an overarching annual theme given to all National History Day participants, students are encouraged to choose a specific topic within that theme that matches their personal interests. The national theme for 2019 "Triumph and Tragedy in History," and students may participate as individuals or as a group, in one of five distinct categories: exhibits, papers, websites, documentary films and performances. Regional winners then move on to the state level competition.



(l to r) Summer Chancey, Kaelin DeCorte, Melissa McDevitt and Laura Orland-2018 National History Day participants, representing Klinger Middle School and winning 1st Place in the Junior Group Performance Competition.

## A SPECIAL WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST STAFF MEMBERS

*From top clockwise:*

**Therese Conturso**, with a communications background and years of assisting Bucks County non-profits in database administration, joins the Mercer Museum as a Development Assistant.

**Jeff Heilakka** is a resident of Doylestown and brings with him almost 40 years of experience in the financial services industry. Jeff is happy and proud to be part of the organization's finance department.

**Kristin Lapos**, who hails from Allentown, Pennsylvania, worked for three years at the Museum of Early Trades & Crafts in New Jersey. She joined the curatorial team and serves as the new Collections Manager.

**Olivia Brown** is originally from Centreville, Virginia and a recent graduate of the University of South Carolina, with a Master's degree in Public History and Museum Studies. Olivia joins the BCHS team as the new Community Programs Coordinator.

# SUMMER INTERN'S DISCOVERY

Every year, Mercer Museum and Fonthill Castle staff rely on the vital volunteer hours summer interns provide to support an array of projects. Whether conducting exhibit research, prepping education programs, updating database records, or leading school tours, the interns gain valuable experience, while building their skill sets for the future. Sometimes, interns take full ownership of their projects, and take it to another level. That's what happened to Kat Baganski. A student at William & Mary College, Kat was working in the Mercer Research Library when she discovered a manuscript of a houseboat journey Henry Mercer took throughout France.

During the summer of 1889, Mercer completed a journey down the Rhone, Allier, and Loire Rivers of France. Along the way, he documented architecture, social customs, landscapes, and so much more by keeping a running diary complete with photographs of his trip. Mercer may have intended to use this documentation to compile a visual presentation or perhaps a book. Now anyone can take this journey through descriptive cataloging and original photographs—all of which is searchable through our online catalog RolloPAC, compliments of Kat Baganski. Keyword search "Henry Chapman Mercer, Glass Plate Negatives" to start your journey.



Relaxing on the houseboat, on the bank of River Loire, 1889



Girl poses with head of La Tarasque, 1889  
Tarascon, France



**Nicole Joie** is a South Jersey native, who recently graduated from the University of Maryland with a degree in Communications, focusing on Public Relations. She joins the organization in her new role as the PR & Marketing Coordinator.

**Janine Daniels** (not pictured) recently joined the team as a Mercer Museum educator. A retired teacher from the Bensalem Township School District, Janine's skills and background align perfectly with the organization's programs and services goals.

# COCKTAILS AT THE CASTLE BENEFITS MERCER MUSEUM'S COMMUNITY PROGRAMS AND EXHIBITIONS

Cocktails at the Castle, held in October, was a great success, raising nearly \$130,000 to support education programs, changing exhibitions, and community services.

More than 400 attendees enjoyed the evening, which once again showcased the Mercer Museum and all its wonder. Keeping with tradition, the area's leading restaurants, wineries, breweries, and caterers provided their specialties for guests to sample and savor. Craft cocktails and specialty drinks were offered by the region's renowned beverage companies, adding a whole new element and capitalizing on the fundraiser's name.

Plan to join us for this year's event, scheduled for Friday, October 11.



## WE ARE VERY GRATEFUL FOR THE COMMUNITY'S SUPPORT.

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Center  
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Central Bucks High School  
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Chambers 19  
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The Zen Den

# TREMENDOUS FRIENDS

For 50 years, the Friends of the Bucks County Historical Society have helped the BCHS in numerous ways. With an interest in history, culture, and the arts, the volunteer auxiliary group sponsors educational programs for the public, bus trips, and other fundraisers to support projects at the Mercer Museum and Library & Fonthill Castle.

"We value the important role Fonthill Castle and Mercer Museum play in promoting history and the stories of our past," stated Mary Jane Clemens, a member of the Friends board. "Most of the programs we plan and present provide our communities with free access to enriching experiences."

At the quarterly meetings, usually held the third Monday in March, May, September, and November, the group presents educational and entertaining programs. Dessert and conversation begin at 12:30 p.m., followed by the featured program. Quarterly programs are free, but donations received support future programs.



November 2018 program featuring Alisa Dupuy of the Ladies of History



THE 2019 SLATE OF OFFERINGS INCLUDE:

Save the Date

## ON THE ROAD WITH THE FRIENDS OF BCHS

**Saturday, March 16:** travel with the Friends of BCHS to Washington, D.C., to visit the National Air and Space Museum, during a year-long celebration of 50 Years of Apollo. Tickets are \$90 (\$85/Friends of BCHS Members)

**Saturday, June 8:** the Friends of BCHS travel to Gettysburg for a guided tour of the Civil War Battlefield, with time to explore the Gettysburg National Military Park Museum & Visitor Center. Tickets are \$80 (\$75/Friends of BCHS Members)

## QUARTERLY PROGRAMS (12:30 p.m., Putman Learning Center, Mercer Museum)

**Monday, March 18:** Samuel Davis portrays General George Washington for the presentation *The Women of the American Revolution*, sharing stories of the important roles women played during the war.

**Monday, May 20:** Carol Simon Levin presents *A W.A.S.P. Takes Wing: The Women Airforce Service Pilots of WW2*

## 4TH ANNUAL KITE DAY AT FONTHILL CASTLE: MAY 19

Friends of BCHS membership is \$15 per person annually, and is in addition to annual Mercer Museum & Fonthill Castle Membership dues. To learn more about the Friends of BCHS, and/or to join this special group, please visit our website, [mercermuseum.org](http://mercermuseum.org) or contact Eileen Shapiro, Development Coordinator at 215-345-0210 ext. 132 / [eshapiro@mercermuseum.org](mailto:eshapiro@mercermuseum.org)



## GREAT GIFTS AT THE MUSEUM SHOPS AT MERCER MUSEUM & FONTHILL CASTLE

A visit to the Mercer Museum or Fonthill Castle isn't complete without experiencing the many treasures in our museum shops. Over the past months, we have added wonderful new offerings for guests who want to share their love of our castles with the world!

From generously-sized bistro mugs and 100% cotton baseball caps, to stylish lapel pins and irresistible "Rollo" stuffed animals, these items make the perfect gift for any museum-lover and any occasion, all while directly supporting the organization's operating funds.

In addition to these museum-themed specialty items, guests always enjoy unique offerings from local and national artisans, plenty of seasonal variety, handmade Bucks County tiles made exclusively by the Moravian Pottery and Tile Works, and one-of-a-kind products related to our changing gallery exhibits. The Mercer Museum Shop specializes in delighting children with shelves of imaginative toys inspired from the past like handmade marbles, kits, and many more classic American toys!

Members of the Bucks County Historical Society always receive a 10% discount on Museum Shop purchases, and there is never an admission fee to enter the shops. You can always reach us at [shop@mercermuseum.org](mailto:shop@mercermuseum.org) or call 215-345-0210, ext. 130. Come see why the Museum Shops at Mercer Museum & Fonthill Castle are the best kept secret in Doylestown!



## SAVE THE DATE... 2019 MERCER LEGACY SWEEPSTAKES DRAWING PARTY

**Sunday, May 5, 4-6 p.m.**  
**Fonthill Castle**

Purchase an entry in our 2019 Mercer Legacy Sweepstakes and you could win a brand new car or \$20,000 cash! To enter visit [mercermuseum.org](http://mercermuseum.org)

(L to r) BCHS President & Executive Director Kyle McKoy;  
John Thompson, The Thompson Organization; and 2018 Mercer Legacy  
Sweepstakes Winner Theresa Furlong and her husband Joe.

