



## Bucks County Historical Society 2019 Annual Report







Mercer Museum



Fonthill Castle

Photos by Kevin Crawford

# A MESSAGE

## from the Board Chairman and the President

There is a movement continuing at the Bucks County Historical Society (BCHS)—a forward focus that puts people and community at the heart of all we do. It is time to pause and review the achievements of 2019 that positioned our organization for success in the years to come. The exciting projects and initiatives outlined in the following pages could not have been realized without the unwavering dedication of BCHS members, volunteers, and donors. To these remarkable supporters and history-loving friends, we say THANK YOU!

Led by the BCHS strategic plan (2019-2021), the board of trustees and staff remained true to the mission and our promise to keep community front and center. With this vision, BCHS invested in staff, programs, services, and its buildings. We recruited new visitor service associates to better serve our customers. Visitation to the castles increased by 22%, with more than 75,000 guests exploring Henry Mercer's iconic sites. Did you know that combined, our museums annually welcome visitors from all 50 states and more than 30 foreign countries? Our national and international draw is a point of pride, and a testament of our organization's renowned stature.

BCHS safeguards 65,650 artifacts; 80,000 items in its archives; and 22,000 research books. The stewardship of the collections—including the Mercer Museum and Fonthill Castle—is fundamental as it supports exhibits, programs and services. Nearly 1,500 researchers both on -and off- site received assistance from our Library and Archives team, and over 100,000 individual searches were recorded in the museum's on-line catalog database. Expanding the collections, staff and volunteers accessioned and cataloged nearly 450 new acquisitions. And with a focus on preservation, donors supported priority window restoration work at Fonthill.

Drawing from the organization's collections, and through valued partnerships with local groups and national museums, a diverse slate of exhibitions provided memorable opportunities for visitors to explore history. Five exhibits were presented, with themes ranging from manufacturing preparations for WWII, and Bucks County's role in the nation's space program, to artistic designs by accomplished metalsmiths, and the origins of Charles Schultz's Peanuts gang.

In addition to these successful exhibitions, education programs and community events drew record setting attendance. Nearly 90 offerings at the castles attracted 19,000 participants. From legacy programs, like our beloved Dolls Day Out and Mercer Museum's Holiday Open House, to new experiences such as our Treasures from the Library Vault series, these offerings brought loyal visitors and new friends to the organization. The year would not be complete without the participation of school and youth groups who enjoyed our popular Log House Life, Frontier Trading, and Simple Machines programs. The castles hosted more than 5,000 students throughout the year.

We take great pride in serving the public and providing enriching experiences that connect people with people. We believe shared history builds strong and resilient communities, and together we are making a difference. We look forward to seeing you soon at the castles.



Heather A. Cevasco  
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

## Exhibitions

In 2019 the Mercer Museum continued its dynamic program of special exhibitions. Over the winter, the museum staged *Manufacturing Victory: The Arsenal of Democracy*, a traveling exhibit from the National World War II Museum in New Orleans. To complement the traveling show, the museum organized a companion exhibit which focused on Bucks County's own World War II-era experiences. The exhibit featured images and artifacts related to local wartime industries, life on the home front, and the military service of area residents.

Two additional exhibits occupied our changing gallery over the summer months. *From Here to There*, a traveling exhibit from ScienceCenter in Ithaca, New York, was designed especially for children and families. An array of interactive devices, intended to foster STEM learning, enabled visitors to explore some of the tools and technologies that have helped move things across distances—both in the past and in the present.



The second exhibit, *Making Astronauts: Bucks County to the Moon*, was developed in collaboration with the Johnsville Centrifuge and Science Museum in Warminster, Bucks County. Marking the 50th Anniversary of the 1969 Apollo moon landing, this exhibit told the story of Bucks County's role in preparing astronauts and testing equipment for the historic journey. From the first Mercury program through Apollo, most of America's early astronauts trained at Johnsville's Naval Air Development Center. A feature of the facility was the Dynamic Flight Simulator, or Centrifuge. Curated jointly by Mercer Museum staff and Johnsville Museum volunteers, the show exhibited numerous artifacts and images from the Johnsville collection as well as additional materials from the Mercer Museum Library.

Rounding out the year, the museum presented the traveling exhibit, *Pigskin Peanuts*, from the Charles Schultz Museum in Santa Rosa, California. Capitalizing on the focus of *Pigskin Peanuts*, and the fall sports season, the Mercer Museum also staged *Bucks County Plays Football*, a local look at the history of the game through images and artifacts acquired mostly over our past two and a half decades of collecting.

The museum's most ambitious exhibit project of 2019, *Forging a Link: Metalsmiths Respond to the Mercer Collection*, took place outside of our changing galleries. Bringing together new work by twenty-three metals artists and craftspeople, this innovative show took place in the original Mercer Museum core. Guest-curated by Professor Cappy Counard of Edinboro University, the show was the outgrowth of a year-long collaboration. Following visits to the museum, and deep engagement with the collections, each artist was asked to create work that responded in some way to what they had seen, felt or imagined. The project produced some extraordinary, insightful pieces, which were then embedded in the original museum in close connection with the objects, exhibits, or architecture that had inspired them. *Forging a Link* ran from late September through the close of 2019.



# MERCER MUSEUM

## Collections

The collections of the Mercer Museum and Library, and Fonthill Castle, portray three broad aspects of our past: (1) Bucks County history and culture, 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 2019, more than 700 researchers visited the Mercer Museum’s Library, while nearly 600 received answers to queries by mail, telephone and email. Over 100,000 individual off-site searches in the museum’s RolloPAC on-line catalog database were also recorded.

Ongoing stewardship activities include maintenance of our 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 “RolloPAC” online catalog portal, accessible via our website. In 2019, staff added some 2,500 additional catalog records to RolloPAC, including for both museum and library collections.

Important collections documentation and preservation projects completed in 2019 included the cataloging and digitization of the A. Oscar Martin collection of Bucks County bridge plans; the cataloging and photography of the Mercer Museum’s basketry collection; conversion of mobile storage shelf units in the Mercer Museum’s Library basement archives to an easier-to-use manual system; the move of collections in two rooms in Fonthill Castle’s Annex wing to a better storage environment off-site, and the repair and restoration of twenty window sashes, frames and doors at Fonthill.

### 2019 Collections Highlights

- Accessioned and cataloged nearly 450 new acquisitions into the museum and library collections.
- Approved loans for exhibits at the Museum of American Folk Art, and the Bucks County Community College Artmobile. Continued or extended prior loans to the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation and the Landis Valley Farm Museum.
- Received a \$5,000 grant to support the re-installation and stabilization of interior tiles at Fonthill Castle. Project to begin in 2020.
- Began project to research and acquire a new collections management system for museum, library, and archival collections. Request for proposal to be submitted in 2020.
- Digitized 230 additional photos from the Library collection for inclusion in our on-line RolloPAC database.

**Fraktur Baptismal Certificate or *Taufschein*, for Levi Krauthammel (b. 1839).** Bedminster Township, Bucks County, 19th century. Gift of the Crouthamel Family, 2019.



**World War II Chaplain's Assistant Armband, 1942-45.** Worn by Wilbur H. Johnson, Willow Grove, Montgomery County and Morrisville, Bucks County, during his wartime service in Europe and the Philippines. Gift of Edward B. Johnson, 2019.



# MERCER MUSEUM AND FONTHILL CASTLE

## Community Programs & Educational Outreach

In 2019, the Mercer Museum welcomed 40,331 visitors and hosted more than 9,000 program attendees at 50 community programs, including adult lectures, special gallery tours, craft workshops, all-day family celebrations and community-partnered gatherings.

Guests enjoyed legacy programs at the Mercer Museum, including the *Dolls Day Out* and *Mercer Museum Holiday Open House*, and delighted in new experiences such as our *Treasures from the Library Vault* series, which highlighted unique collections in the Mercer Museum's Library.

The museum also hosted programs in conjunction with our special exhibits. From a presentation and meet-and-greet with Astronaut Winston Scott for our *Making Astronauts: Bucks County to the Moon* exhibit, to lectures by artists who were featured in our one-of-a-kind exhibit, *Forging A Link: Metalsmiths Respond to the Mercer Collection*, guests of all ages and interests were able to further their connection to our exhibits and collections through our slate of community programs.

Across the mile, Fonthill Castle welcomed 34,752 visitors and hosted over 10,000 program attendees at 32 community programs, including special tours, theatrical performances, all-day celebrations, and themed escape rooms.

In 2019, Fonthill Castle worked in partnership with the Actors' NET of Bucks County to host two live theatrical performances of William Shakespeare's "The Winter's Tale" with the castle serving as the spectacular backdrop. Over the two performances, more than 250 guests enjoyed the play from the lawn beside the castle's Spring Terrace. In December, *Fonthill Castle's Holiday Lights Meander* events continued to grow dramatically. Attendance increased from almost 1,000 guests to more than 4,000 guests with event dates increased from two full days to six full days.

The Bucks County Historical Society also furthered connections to Bucks County history and the museum's collections through its educational programs. The Mercer Museum and Fonthill Castle hosted more than 5,000 students with 84 school and youth groups visiting our castles. These groups enjoyed our educational programs *Log House Life*, *Frontier Trading*, *Simple Machines* and many more.

Each year, the Bucks County Historical Society acts as the Bucks and Montgomery County regional coordinator for the National History Day contest. In 2019, the regional contest was held in collaboration with professors and staff at Delaware Valley University and welcomed 284 student participants.

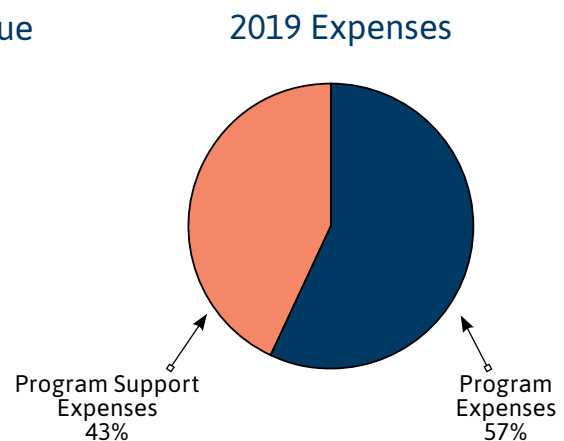
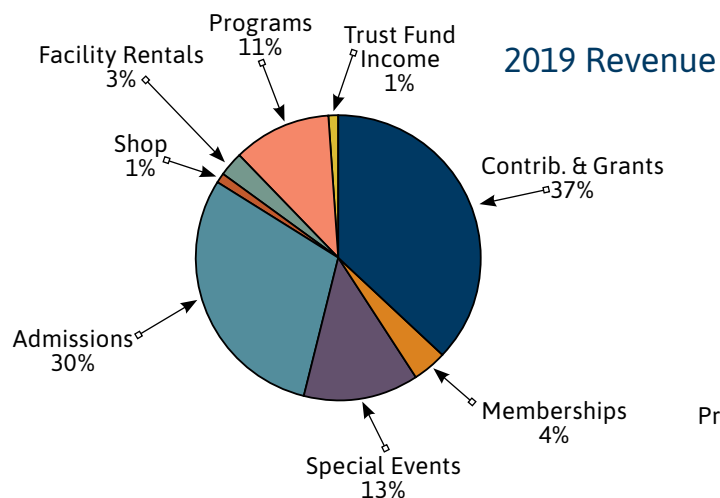


# FINANCIAL REPORT

## Statement of Financial Position

Statements of Activities: Years ended December 31, 2019 and 2018

	2019	2018
<b>SUPPORT AND REVENUE:</b>		
Grants and Contributions	\$742,540	\$667,188
Memberships	76,644	120,126
Special events	256,902	245,219
Museum operations:		
Admissions	602,163	474,957
Programs	218,034	162,976
Museum shop	30,622	37,553
Facilities rental	50,674	29,202
Miscellaneous income	7,059	6,100
Trust fund income	31,827	32,777
	2,014,465	1,776,098
<b>EXPENSES:</b>		
Program Services:		
Library	250,586	233,566
Curatorial	1,144,553	1,052,472
Educational	485,018	413,019
Support Services:		
Management and general	690,469	563,248
Development and fundraising	712,171	643,499
	3,282,797	2,905,894
Change in net assets before Nonoperating Revenues,		
Gains and Other Support	(1,268,332)	(1,129,796)
Non-operating Revenues, Gains and Other Support		
Investment Income	1,905,545	(497,446)
Change in net assets	637,213	(1,627,242)
Net assets, beginning of year	22,504,084	24,131,326
Net assets, end of year	\$23,141,297	\$22,504,084
Special Events cost	-	-
Museum Shop Cost	54,857	49,338
Publication Cost	-	2,216





# OUR 2019 DONORS AND CONTRIBUTORS...

Making all we do possible through their generosity.

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*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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*We apologize for any misspellings  
or omissions*

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