



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**  
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## **Fonthill Castle Awarded Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission Keystone Historic Preservation Grant**

**DOYLESTOWN, PA** – Fonthill Castle, operated by the Bucks County Historical Society (BCHS), is pleased to announce that it has received a grant through the Keystone Historic Preservation Grant program to comprehensively survey, assess and evaluate the condition of the stucco finishes and patches on the exterior wall surfaces and cornices of the National Landmark site.

The project, funded by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission's Keystone Historic Preservation Grant program with matching funds provided by the Rapaport Family Charitable Trust, is intended to explore the state of the original stucco on the exterior of Fonthill Castle, as well as stucco that was applied as part of patching efforts after the castle's construction.

"Fonthill Castle is a prominent and much loved landmark in Doylestown and Central Bucks County," says Cory Amsler, Vice President of Collections & Interpretation at the Bucks County Historical Society. "As custodians for the artistic and architectural legacy of Henry Mercer, we wish to ensure Fonthill Castle's long-term preservation, and its aesthetic appearance as Mercer intended. This project is another step toward that goal."

The project will comprehensively assess the condition of the finishes on all of the building's vertical surfaces, as well as the condition of its cornices. This project will also provide an opportunity to evaluate the performance of previous patches and repairs to the castle's walls and cornices. All of this work is being conducted by architectural conservators from Heritage Conservation Collective, based in Philadelphia.

Following the survey, and based on laboratory analysis of stucco samples and on conservators' treatment recommendations, two test patches or restorations will be formulated and applied, and subsequently evaluated for appearance and performance. These test restorations will

provide the basis for future large scale work on Fonthill Castle's exterior walls, which also may include stabilization, rather than replacement, of existing stucco finishes.

Much of the assessment work is scheduled to take place during the entire month of February, with conservators accessing the building's heights by use of a large hydraulic lift while the castle is open to visitors. The week of Tuesday, February 27 – Friday, March 1, 2024, Fonthill Castle will be closed to the public to allow the lift access to areas of the building directly above the main visitor entrance.

Fonthill Castle was the home of Henry Chapman Mercer (1856-1930), a Doylestown-born archaeologist, anthropologist, ceramist, scholar, and antiquarian. Mercer built Fonthill Castle both as his home and as a showplace to display his collection of tiles and prints, assembled over the course of his life. The creative, idiosyncratic building is an eclectic mix of Medieval, Gothic, and Byzantine architectural styles, and is significant as an early artistic example of poured reinforced concrete. Mercer began building Fonthill Castle in 1908 and moved into the house in 1912. He resided there until his death in 1930. The house is heavily tile embellished and its interior deliberately decorated in keeping with Aesthetic Period, Colonial Revival, and Arts & Crafts Era sensibilities.

This project is supported by a grant from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission's Keystone Historic Preservation Grant, a program funded by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, with matching funds provided by the Rapaport Family Charitable Trust.

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### **About the Mercer Museum & Fonthill Castle**

Located in Doylestown, Bucks County, PA, the Mercer Museum and Fonthill Castle are historic castles celebrating the legacy of Henry Chapman Mercer (1856-1930), American archaeologist, anthropologist, ceramicist and scholar. Both sites are operated by the Bucks County Historical Society (BCHS).

The Mercer Museum, one of Bucks County's premier cultural attractions and a Smithsonian affiliate, features both local and national seasonal exhibits as well as a core museum collection of over 17,000 pre-Industrial tools. This permanent collection offers visitors a unique window into pre-Industrial America through sixty different crafts and trades and is one of the world's most comprehensive portraits of American material culture. The museum also features a research library that is a center for local history related to Bucks County and the surrounding region, with its roots dating back to the founding of the Bucks County Historical Society in 1880.

Fonthill Castle was built between 1908-1912 and was the home of Henry Chapman Mercer. Mercer built Fonthill Castle as his residence and showplace for his collection of tiles and prints. The castle serves as an early example of reinforced concrete and features forty-four rooms, over two hundred windows, and eighteen fireplaces. Fonthill Castle's interior features Mercer's renowned, hand-crafted ceramic tiles designed at the height of the Arts and Crafts movement.

The Mercer Museum is located at 84 South Pine Street, Doylestown, PA, 18901. Fonthill Castle is located at 525 East Court Street in Doylestown, PA, 18901.

The Mercer Museum & Fonthill Castle are open Tuesdays – Sundays from 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. For up-to-date ticket and schedule information, please visit [mercermuseum.org](http://mercermuseum.org).

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