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Bucks County Historical Society Plans Multi-Phase Arborist Work at Fonthill Castle Property

DOYLESTOWN, PA – Fonthill Castle, operated by the Bucks County Historical Society (BCHS), announces the next phase of ongoing environmental initiatives on its 69-acre property. Beginning on Tuesday, July 23, 2024, approximately fifteen dead trees identified in a forestry assessment plan will be removed in the interest of public service, with additional work to be done in the future.

The Fonthill Castle property features the National Historic Landmark home of archaeologist and tile maker Henry Chapman Mercer, with an estate cultivated as an arboretum and multiple forested regions with mature trees. Known for its extensive trail system and natural features, the property is beloved by the community, and provides an environmental and social benefit to the region.

The hazardous tree removal is a continuing phase of the BCHS's planned initiative to care for the 69-acres that surround Henry Mercer's Fonthill Castle, which was recently named #4 of 18 of the most beautiful castles in the U.S. by *Architectural Digest*.

While Fonthill Castle's grounds are privately owned by BCHS and located in the Township, some of the trees requiring urgent removal are located along Doylestown Borough's North and East streets, and BCHS is working in partnership with both Doylestown Township and Doylestown Borough on this effort.

Since 2023, the Bucks County Historical Society has been convening experts to explore a range of conservation and enhancement possibilities to the woodlands and open spaces surrounding Fonthill Castle. The goal is to realize Henry Mercer's vision to foster education and enjoyment of both the arts and nature for the public year-round.

BCHS contracted Brandywine Urban Forestry in the spring of 2024 for a comprehensive urban forest assessment and management plan for all 69 acres of the Fonthill Castle property. This assessment reviewed the forest's overall health and classified the status of the trees, cataloging all of the major trees in the maintained landscape, as well as trees of concern throughout the property.

During this upcoming phase, the tree removal will be conducted by arborists from John B. Ward & Co., and will consist of multiple dead trees along North Street, including one Eastern White Pine, one Red Maple and three Ash. The trees slated for removal along East Street include five Ash, one Red Maple, and two Oak. Additional areas of tree work in this phase include the intersection of Swamp Road and East Court St, as well as an area behind the Welcome Center at Fonthill Castle.

This work is being funded by generous donations from George Ball, CEO of W. Altee Burpee Company, Doylestown, PA; The Family of William J. Jr. and Geraldine Happ, Doylestown, PA; Linda Butzier Hodgdon, Lahaska, PA; Jim and Kathy Morrison, New Bern, NC; and The Sigety Family, Pipersville, PA.

“As stewards of Henry Chapman Mercer’s legacy, the Bucks County Historical Society is not only responsible for caring for the building and objects he left behind, but for fulfilling Mercer’s vision of keeping the privately-owned grounds open to the public so everyone can enjoy the region’s natural beauty, native trees and species, and so that we can offer educational opportunities for generations to come,” said Kyle McKoy, BCHS President and CEO.

Fonthill Castle is operated by the Bucks County Historical Society as a historic house museum and community cultural gathering place, and is located at 525 East Court Street in Doylestown, PA, 18901.

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Project Background

Guided by Mercer’s vision and the public’s increased use of the Fonthill grounds for recreation and respite, master planning for the Fonthill Castle grounds began in 2019. In 2022, BCHS secured State funding to hire OLIN, a premier, international landscape design firm founded in Philadelphia, to begin creation of a Fonthill Conceptual Master Plan.

Completed in May 2023, the Master Plan currently features six exciting Fonthill Castle projects to benefit the community and the environment, with the Woodlands Management Project the priority.

In March 2024, BCHS contracted Brandywine Urban Forest Management, an environmental consultant from Chesterbrook, PA, to perform a survey and thorough analysis of the entire 69-acre Fonthill Castle lands. The extensive report included identification and detailed study of every healthy, dead, and dying tree on the property.

The report, issued in May 2024, is now being used as a guide to responsibly manage Fonthill’s forested region and habitats of the property, and address safety concerns posed by dead and dying trees, insect and disease issues, and invasive species that are causing forest decline. The multi-phase project goal is the healthy restoration and responsible rehabilitation of the Fonthill Castle woodlands and property.

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).

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.

Today, Fonthill Castle is operated by the Bucks County Historical Society as a historic house museum and community cultural gathering place. Fonthill Castle is located at 525 East Court Street in Doylestown, PA, 18901.

For additional information on this project, please contact:

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