NEW! Custom Moravian Tiles

We are excited to announce our newest item for sale in the Museum Shop- a custom Moravian tile with the Pannebakker Coat of Arms!

These tiles were designed and handmade by The Tileworks in Doylestown. The Tileworks is a “working history” museum that prides themselves on producing handmade tiles and mosaics in the same style of Henry Chapman Mercer's original designs. Mercer was a contemporary of Gov. Samuel W. Pennypacker. Mercer produced 368 mosaics for the Capitol building in Harrisburg- which was dedicated in 1906 during Samuel's term in office.

These 4x4 inch tiles are made of natural, unrefined Bucks County clay. They feature the Pannebakker Coat of Arms, representative of Gov. Samuel Whitaker Pennypacker's family and history. On the shield of the Coat of Arms are three “panne” tiles- for which the family is named.

As a special introductory offer, these handmade tiles are being sold for $50. If you are interested in purchasing a tile, please visit the site during our open hours or call for shipping inquiries.
A Safe and Sane Fourth

This July 4th marks the 248th anniversary of the Continental Congress officially adopting the final version of the Declaration of Independence. With our nation’s 250th rapidly approaching, let’s take a look at Independence Day celebrations of years past.

Today, the Fourth of July is often commemorated with fireworks. It may surprise you to know that fireworks have long since been associated with the holiday. In fact, in a letter written to his wife, Abigail, on July 3, 1776, John Adams predicted future celebrations of the holiday:

[Independence Day] will be the most memorable Epoch, in the History of America. I am apt to believe that it will be celebrated, by succeeding Generations, as the great anniversary Festival. It ought to be commemorated, as the Day of Deliverance by solemn Acts of Devotion to God Almighty. It ought to be solemnized with Pomp and Parade, with Shews, Games, Sports, Guns, Bells, Bonfires and Illuminations from one End of this Continent to the other from this Time forward forever more.

By the early 1900s, fireworks were cheap, plentiful, and unregulated. Unsurprisingly, this posed a significant danger. Lost limbs and fingers, burns, blinding explosions, lockjaw, and death were all consequences of unregulated explosives.

This danger was so significant that in 1903 the American Medical Association began keeping records of people injured and killed in Fourth of July festivities. In 1903 alone, the Journal of the American Medical Association reported that 466 people died and 4,449 people were injured due to Fourth of July related accidents. Infections from tetanus comprised a large number of those deaths, triggered by shrapnel from fireworks and toy guns that was embedded into a person’s skin. From 1903 to 1909, about two-thirds of July 4th deaths connected to explosive incidents were tetanus deaths. The outbreaks of tetanus were so consistent, that doctors coined it “patriotic tetanus.” Tetanus is caused by the Clostridium tetani bacterium that pumps out toxins that cause intense muscle spasms, particularly in the jaw from which the common name “lockjaw” derives. Left untreated, tetanus kills 90% of its...
victims. Fireworks could cause a tetanus infection when they exploded onto spore-laden ground, sending showers of dirty shrapnel deep into the skin of bystanders.

Some officials publicly opposed traditional Independence Day celebrations due to the dangers. One such official was Charles Pennypacker, the Burgess of West Chester and second cousin of Governor Samuel W. Pennypacker. Charles Pennypacker insisted that the Fourth of July had gotten hopelessly out of control. He was part of a group of lawmakers that advocated for a safer holiday, an end to unsupervised fireworks. This group promoted a “Safe and Sane Fourth” with a focus on family.

In a letter published in the Philadelphia Inquirer, Charles Pennypacker gave the following suggestion:

A trolley ride to the Brandywine, a quiet day under the trees, home-baked bread with lemon butter, and cake with deviled eggs may be civilized features of the day. The sweat of a harvest field is as honorable as that of a ball field. Take the good wife and all the children. Spend your money for sandwiches instead of squibs. The price of five skyrockets or Roman candles will buy a hammock, whose swing delights youth and old age in all lands. Get home in the golden shadow of sunset and read aloud Robert Burns’ “The Cotter’s Sunday Night,” and sweet sleep will shut out the noises and din of ‘a glorious Fourth.’

His suggestions were not all well met. In 1904, locals gathered outside Pennypacker’s house and set off explosives. Despite public disinterest, the “Safe and Sane Fourth” movement continued.

In the next several years, the dangers of explosives became a larger public concern. Newspapers printed warnings and instructions on how to avoid injury and lockjaw.

On July 1, 1904, The Philadelphia Inquirer printed the following statement from Dr. Edward Martin, Director of the Department of Heath and Charities:

Unless the sale of blank cartridges and cannon crackers is restricted, there will be from twelve to twenty-four children die in this city from tetanus, as an aftermath of Fourth of July.
In the early 1900s, as health concerns rose, cities around the country took different routes to try and ensure a safe Fourth.

Chicago in 1903 saw the prohibition of many different types of explosives including fireworks, cannons, guns, dynamite, torpedoes, and bombs. The city of Cleveland, Ohio, banned the sale of toy pistols, blank cartridges, and firecrackers within city limits. Philadelphia took similar measures of banning the sale of certain items. The Mayor of Philadelphia went a step further and promised to prosecute shop owners who sold prohibited items that resulted in death from lockjaw.

Other cities chose to create new, safe celebrations rather than simply banning old ones. Kansas City hired bands to play in parks around the city. Santa Fe hosted a beauty pageant. Minneapolis raised funds to give every child a lunch basket. Boston held “Safe and Sane” marches which were entirely firecracker free. President William Howard Taft attended one of those marches in 1910. Taft expressed his support of the Safe and Sane movement in this letter to the district commissioner written on July 3, 1909:

I am heartily in sympathy with the movement to rid the celebration of our country's natal day of these distressing accidents that might be avoided and are merely due to a recklessness against which the public protest cannot be too empathetic.

The Safe and Sane reform movement was active between 1903 and 1916. The movement resulted in legislation and new celebrations. Between the results of the movement and the development of the tetanus treatments, deaths related to Fourth of July injuries significantly declined in the early 20th century. Although firework injuries are still rampant on the Fourth of July, concerns regarding the safety of the day have largely dissipated since the early 1900s. We at Pennypacker Mills wish everyone a Safe and Sane Fourth!

What did Samuel W. Pennypacker think of Independence Day? The following is an excerpt from his journal on Monday, July 4th of 1859:

Eighty-three years since the Declaration of American Independence. Yes! This vast country of ours, comprising of thirty three states and a great extent of territory. This broad Republic, the centre of Civilization and the admiration of the World is now enjoying its eighty third birthday.

Would to God those great events of '76 could be commemorated in a more worthy manner in accordance with the designs and feelings of our Forefathers of the Revolution, than is now as a general custom done.
Upcoming Events

Victorian Game Day
Sat., July 27th 12:00pm - 4:00pm
Drop by Pennypacker Mills on Saturday, July 27th between 12:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. for a hands-on Victorian Game Day. All are welcome to enjoy toys and games that were popular in the Victorian Era. Try your hand at croquet, graces, ring toss, cup and ball, Jacob’s Ladder, and much more! Test out optical illusion toys like flip books and stereoscopes.

Featured at our game day is the Athletic Base Ball Club of Philadelphia! Join the team for an interactive game of “Town Ball,” before watching a full game of baseball using 1860s rules, uniforms, and equipment. Bring a chair or blanket to sit on to enjoy the game.

This event is FREE and open to all ages.

Take home the fun!
Many old fashioned games and toys will be available for purchase.

Craft Marketplace
Sat., September 14th 9:30am - 3:00pm
The Friends of Pennypacker Mills welcome you to their 13th Annual Craft Marketplace! Buy one-of-a-kind crafts, food, gifts, and much more at this award-winning craft fair.

The Friends of Pennypacker Mills verifies each crafter’s products to ensure each is hand crafted. About 111 crafters will attend the event, giving a wide range of products. Entry to the site and parking are FREE!
New Books on the StoryWalk!

Make sure to stop by our StoryWalk to check out these great books!

In July, the StoryWalk will feature “My First Book of Trains.” From steam locomotives and diesel engines to electric railcars, inquisitive kids will learn all about trains and the important jobs they do! Filled with colorful pictures, and amazing train trivia, kids will love reading along, and expand their knowledge of science and engineering along the way.

In August and September, the StoryWalk will feature “Brave Clara Barton.” Readers will meet a woman who outgrew her childhood shyness to become a fearless "Angel of the Battlefield"! Clara's story is a testament to the strength, grit, and persistence of women; Clara Barton is a role model who transcends history.

Virtual Exhibit: All Aboard the Perkiomen Railroad

Interested in the Perkiomen Railroad, but unable to make it to Pennypacker Mills to view our current exhibit? No problem! Our current exhibit, All Aboard the Perkiomen Railroad is now online and available for public viewing. Visit the following link to see the exhibit: https://sites.google.com/view/ppm-virtual-exhibitions

Will you be our 500,000th visitor?

We are expecting to reach our 500,000 visitors sometime in the next few months. Will it be you? To celebrate this achievement, our 500,000th visitor will receive a special package of Pennypacker Mills merchandise as a thank-you for supporting the site!