To many people, the winters of their childhoods seem to have been far more bitter and cold than those of today. The most infamous snowstorm, the Blizzard of 1888, struck Pennsylvania and the entire East coast on March 11 of that year. In Pennsylvania, 20-50 inches of snow was recorded for the three-day cyclone. Snowdrifts were around twenty feet tall and were nearly impossible to dig out. Many people were stranded on trains, in their homes, or buried beneath the snowfall. The snowstorm of 1915 also hit the East Coast, and Philadelphia in particular.

Given how severe the winters of the late 1800’s and early 1900’s were, winter clothing became essential. Back then, people wore fur and flannel, muffs and hoods, and all kinds of outer clothing that aren’t in our clothing vocabulary today. Fashion changes each season and the early 20th century was no different.

Women’s Fashions
Women in the Edwardian era were starting to dress for a more active lifestyle. Clothing was simpler and more streamlined than before. “The New Woman” was highly encouraged by women’s suffrage. Women that identified with this fashion movement were the type that ventured out of maintaining a home and began to pursue higher education, office jobs, and outdoor recreation, such as the Pennypacker daughters.

Tailored suits became popular as women working white collar office jobs wanted to seem more masculine and blend into the male dominated environment. Wool or tweed suit clothing, called tailor-mades, featured ankle-length skirts with matching jackets. They were worn with fox furs and huge hats.

Happenings in January

Closed
New Year’s Day
Weds., Jan. 1

Holiday Tours
End Sun., Jan 5

Sat., Jan. 25
Cooking Demonstration:
Comfort Food of the Early 20th Century
10 am to 3 pm
Classroom - Free

Ends Fri., Jan. 31
“Family Roots” Exhibit
Included on all Guided Tours

Happenings in February

Sat., Feb. 8
Victorian Valentines for Kids!
10 am to 12 pm
Classroom
Fee: $5/child
Wool was the winter fabric of choice, however wool was by no means a perfect material for winter garments. It absorbed water like a sponge and got increasingly heavy as a result. Fur provided an alternative for the well-to-do and was considered very fashionable in the early 20th century. Its expense limited its popularity.

Muffs were an essential hand warming fashion. Cylindrical in shape and covered with fur, fabric, feathers or other soft material, they were open ended to place hands inside to keep them warm. Muffs were originally a purse and hand warmer in one back in 1570, when fur trimming was becoming popular. Muff handbags were popular in the 1880’s when handbags were new.

While some strict Victorian ideals had disappeared from society during the Edwardian era, gloves were still a popular fashion accessory. Proper women often wore gloves to social events, especially women in middle and upper-class society. During the day, women wore leather or suede gloves that extended past their forearms. These gloves also typically featured rows of dainty buttons that extended from the wrist to beyond the elbow. Gloves during this time period were also expected to be properly tailored. Wearing ill-fitting gloves indicated you belonged in a lower class in society.

In the evenings, Edwardian women wore lavish gloves made of silk, suede, or leather. More formal in design, these evening gloves often extended all the way to a woman’s bicep. These gloves also featured decorative embroidery or embellishments. While they were typically white, ivory, gray, or another light neutral shade, it wasn’t uncommon for women to wear gloves that featured various pastel tones, like light green or lavender.

Men’s Fashions
The beginning of the Edwardian era in the early 20th century brought a steady decline in the wearing of frock coats. The morning coat rose in relative formality, first becoming acceptable for businessmen, then becoming standard dress for most occasions. The lounge suit was slowly accepted as being correct to wear outside of private clubs. While still reserved for private gatherings, usually with no ladies, black tie became more common.

Three-piece suits consisting of a lounge coat with matching waistcoat and trousers were worn, as were matching coat and waistcoat with contrasting trousers, or matching coat and trousers with contrasting waistcoat. Trousers were shorter than before, and often had creased cuffs while waistcoats fastened high on the chest and were single-breasted.

The Norfolk jacket was considered fashionable for shooting and rugged outdoor pursuits. It was made of sturdy tweed or similar fabric and featured paired box pleats over the chest and back, with a fabric belt. Worn with matching knickerbockers, they became the “Norfolk suit.” This was suitable for bicycling or golf with knee-length stockings and low shoes, or for hunting with sturdy boots or shoes with leather gaiters.

Overcoats were mostly the same styles as the 1900-1909 decade. Wool trench coats were very heavy with wide lapels and a long hem that started at the ankle up to mid-calf. The new fashionable coat was just below knee length but made of light wool. A black velvet collar made them look more formal and stylish enough to pair well with business suits. Most overcoats were made of wool, melton (a dense tightly woven fabric that is felted and heavily brushed for an ultra soft hand), or Chinchilla (a weave, not the animal.) Heavy winter coats were usually lined in animal fur such as seal for the rich, and sheepskin for everyone else. All fur coats were made of anything from raccoon to rabbit or bear.

The reversible leather and corduroy double-breasted jackets were a durable and affordable working-class coat. Sheepskin lined corduroy or moleskin jackets ranged from waist length to knee length.

While today’s winter clothing is made of many different materials, so was the clothing of yesteryear. Mainly wool and a variety of animal furs, they certainly would not be seen today for a variety of reasons! Stay warm!
Pennypacker Mills is blessed to have many talented volunteers assist us throughout the year. They help us in a variety of ways. Carol Custer has volunteered here since the summer of 2010 and came to us through RSVP, the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program of Montgomery County.

Any visitor to Pennypacker Mills can usually find Carol guiding tours, helping with school groups or summer camps (who come for tours and educational programming), assisting in the development and making of crafts for our events and winter workshops, helping to maintain the gardens by our parking lot, and helping with Christmas decorating. She also helps with our collection by scanning historical items into our database. She works with the staff to develop and make over 200 of our Christmas donation ornaments too!

Carol has also been a member of the Board of the Friends of Pennypacker Mills for several years. Her contribution in creating the Craft Marketplace has enabled the Friends to build support for the Pennypacker Mills historic site. Carol has also been instrumental in organizing the Friends most attended event at the Mills, the Craft Marketplace. Throughout the year, Carol handles the recruitment and registration of craft vendors which now number over 100! The donations go towards educational programs and the conservation of the collection here.

We thought we’d ask Carol why she chose Pennypacker Mills to volunteer. Below she shares her enthusiasm in the hope that it might spur others to join our ranks of volunteers:

**Why did you choose to volunteer at Pennypacker Mills?**

“I chose Pennypacker Mills after retiring when I went to visit with my husband for the first time and fell in love with all the Victorian furnishings.”

**What do you enjoy doing the most?**

“It’s hard to pinpoint any one favorite thing. I love interacting with the public at events and telling them all about the family and the house and its history. I also love scanning the articles and reading what they had to say back in the 1800’s. I love the crafting and the gardening. I just have to say I love the place and the people I get to work with and all the people I meet.”

**What would you say to people who are considering volunteering here to encourage them?**

“I would just want to tell anyone who considers volunteering here that there is a wealth of opportunity considering all that goes on at Pennypacker Mills and you won’t be disappointed! There’s a niche for everyone and all the people I work with are so nice!”

There are a variety of ways you can help the site and depending on the time you have, we can suggest areas that might be helpful to us and rewarding for you. We are always looking for volunteers to learn how to give guided tours. Or people interested in dressing in period clothing and portraying family and friends at both our Victorian Tea and the Victorian Christmas Open House. We can provide the clothing too. Crafts are a big part of our winter workshops so helping to develop those crafts, making the various parts and assisting with the workshops is also where we need help. Spring and summertime bring a new group of visitors, school children. The barn houses our 1900s History Center and other activities are performed in our classroom.

If you are interested in volunteering at the Mills, give our office a call and make an appointment to come in and fill out the necessary paperwork, criminal checks, and child abuse clearances. Join a friendly group of people, young and older, men, women and teens, and match your interests to our site! Call 610-287-9349.
With our busy lives, sometimes home cooking isn’t possible. With the ability to push a button to perfectly chop ingredients and microwave foods to defrost and even cook, we have totally forgotten what it is really like to have to cook from scratch. Welcome to the kitchen of the early 1900s.

Cook’s Work
Think about getting up hours earlier before starting breakfast just to get the stove hot enough to cook on! Hauling buckets of coal up from the basement, trying to light anthracite coal, which was not so easy, and getting the heat building in the fuel box to move beneath the stove top and eventually surround the oven for even baking. Then, removing the ashes, usually twice a day. Periodically, a waxy black polish had to be applied to keep the stove from rusting. On average, it took an hour or more a day to tend the stove.

These were just some of the challenges that cooks faced here at Pennypacker Mills and every other kitchen in the early 1900’s.

Technology
Recipes did not provide temperatures to bake; there were no thermostats. Rather than lowering temperatures by turning a knob, as we do today, cooks placed pots on different areas of the stove where they could cook at higher or lower heat levels. The further away from the heat source, the cooler it was. Air vents permitted air to circulate heat or remove it up the chimney.

Your hand was your best cooking tool. Just place it in the oven for a few seconds to get a sense of how hot it was. You were cooking by experience and most hired cooks were chosen based on their cooking acumen.

Cookbooks
Cookbooks such as The Boston Cooking-School Cook Book, published in 1896 by Fannie Merritt Farmer, not only gave out tried and true recipes, but also introduced readers to the latest in then-modern gadgetry, and advised women on which hand-cranked appliance was a sound investment and a genuine help in the kitchen. Through these books women eventually learned the importance of measuring ingredients rather than simply using a “pinch” of this or a “walnut-size” amount of that as had been done during the 18th and early 19th centuries.

Stop by the Classroom building on this wintry day and see our cooks as they prepare comfort foods such as soup, stews with dumplings, and biscuits that would have been found in any home during this time of year.

All ages, free, suggested donation $2/person. The Pennypacker mansion will be open for free guided tours also. Please contact the site if weather is inclement to reschedule. Telephone: 610-287-9349.
Valentine Workshop for Kids!

Sat., February 8th  10 am to 12 pm

Fee: $5/child, with an adult - Ages 5+
Pre-registration deadline Jan. 31

Spend a winter morning at the Mills making fantastic Valentines to share! There is a special Valentine banner with doilies, shiny ribbons and a bee too! Kids can paint a homemade wooden frame, place their handprint on paper, and attach hearts to create a personal masterpiece. What a perfect gift we have for kids to share! They will create a paper tea cup and place a special tea bag inside for someone special to enjoy! We always include a Valentine card and this one will pop out as you open it. Bring along your creativity and have fun! We’ll take a refreshment break too.

Pre-register me for the Valentines Workshop for Kids! You may pay via personal check, or credit card by phone. Call the site for availability before sending a check.

Name

Street Address

City  State  Zip Code

Tel #

Email for e-confirmation

Additional friends who will be attending:

Send a check made payable to Pennypacker Mills
Mail to: Pennypacker Mills  5 Haldeman Road, Schwenksville, PA 19473
How fortunate we are to have such wonderful volunteers who help us throughout the year. Through a thousand ways, these people have answered our call for help and we are so grateful. Without their help, we could not host the large events, educate large numbers of students, and catalogue the massive collection here. We want to take the time to acknowledge their contributions by naming them and the many hours they offer to help us.

### 2019 Pennypacker Mills Volunteers

*It’s not for money, it’s not for fame.*  
*It’s not for any personal gain.*  
*It’s just for love of fellowman.*  
*It’s just to give a tithe of self.*  

_That’s something you can’t buy with wealth._  
*It’s not medals won with pride._  
*It’s for that feeling deep inside._  
*It’s that reward down in your heart._  
*It’s that feeling that you’ve been a part._  

_of helping others far and near, that makes you be a Volunteer!_

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<th>Name</th>
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Dates for yearly totals are Dec 1, 2018 to Dec 1, 2019

**TOTAL HOURS** 2014.5

* Board Member, Friends of Pennypacker Mills  
** RSVP of Montgomery County
**Door Knob Basket Workshop**

Sat., April 11th  10 am to 2 pm

Fee: $35/person  Ages 15+
Pre-registration Deadline: April 3

Spend a morning at Pennypacker Mills creating your own basket masterpiece to enjoy yourself or give as a gift to someone special! Our two instructors will provide all the materials and give you step-by-step instructions during this four-hour workshop.

The door knob basket is meant to be hung from, well, a door knob or anything else you choose. It’s an easy basket to weave. Participants will learn how to square the bottom, twine, up stake, weave rows, lash on a rim and wrap a handle, all in one lesson! Moderate hand strength is required.

The basket measures 4.5 inches high, 6 inches wide, and 4.5 inches deep. You will have the option of weaving color into your basket too.

This workshop is located in the Classroom, just up the hill from the Pennypacker Mills mansion.

Coffee and tea will be provided, however, if you wish to bring along a bag lunch and drink, there is a convenient refrigerator to keep your lunch cold.

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<tr>
<th>Pre-register me for the <strong>Door Knob Basket Workshop</strong>! You may pay via personal check or credit card by phone. Call the site for availability before sending a check. Tel: 610-287-9349.</th>
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<td>_____ X $35 = $</td>
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<td><strong># People</strong></td>
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Make checks payable to Pennypacker Mills. 
Mail to: Pennypacker Mills  5 Haldeman Road, Schwenksville, PA 19473
Montgomery Board of Commissioners
Valerie Arkoosh, MD, MPH, Chair
Kenneth E. Lawrence, Jr. Vice Chair
Joseph C. Gale, Commissioner

Pennypacker Mills
5 Haldeman Road
Schwenksville, PA 19473

Where is your breadbox?

Breadboxes were container for storing bread and other baked goods so as to keep them fresh. However, once food preservatives and wrapped plastic were introduced, the use of the breadbox dropped sharply.

Breadboxes are designed to keep the bread at room temperature, prolonging storage time. They have a lid that allows for airflow to reduce condensation and the formation of mold and one that is tight enough to protect from mice and other pests.

Rather than storing bread in the refrigerator, as we do today, the breadbox creates a controlled environment that raises the humidity in the box, but with the air circulation created, it keeps bread from getting moist as in a sealed plastic bag.

So next time you tour Pennypacker Mills, take note of our breadbox and remember why we have it in our kitchen. Look around too. You may also find a little critter looking for a few crumbs!

Breadboxes certainly would have discouraged mice but that was not the total reason they were invented. Homemade bread (without chemical preservatives) has a very short shelf life – hence the phrase “our daily bread.” When there was bread left over, the bread was stored in a breadbox.

Breadboxes used to be a staple and every home had one. A breadbox was a container for storing bread and other baked goods so as to keep them fresh. However, once food preservatives and wrapped plastic were introduced, the use of the breadbox dropped sharply.

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