A new exhibit, *Handicrafts in the Home*, will open at Pennypacker Mills on Sunday March 1st with a special gallery talk by the Curator at 1:00 pm. Men and women were known for their handicrafts that would be displayed and used in their home. These ranged from frakturs, theorem paintings, embroideries, wax fruit displays, china painting, quilts and more. The exhibit will feature these items, many of which were created by Pennypacker family members.

During the Victorian era when Samuel W. Pennypacker and his children grew up, the way people decorated and displayed items within their own home changed. A variety of books and articles from that era stated that a bare room was considered in bad taste, and items should show the owner’s interests. When Samuel became governor in 1903, he was astonished that the decorations in the executive mansion did not represent the state of Pennsylvania, which was his personal interest.

For some people, decorative touches could be as simple as adding needlepoint on pillows. Plain walls were unacceptable, wallpaper sales exploded in the 1850’s. Something needed to be hung on the walls. Picture rails became popular in the 1840’s, where a rail could be applied on the wall just below the ceiling where framed items could be hung. It wasn’t until the 1920’s when it became easier to just hammer a nail into the wall from which paintings, photographs and mirrors could be hung. Walls, shelves and rails gave an opportunity for people to display items they made as well as adding decoration. The dining room at Pennypacker Mills has plate rails that go around the entire room.

The eighteenth century witnessed a lot of self-sufficiency, where a husband may be constructing benches or work tables, and the wife might be spinning and weaving to make bedsheets and clothing. The industrial revolution changed the woman’s role to more ornamental embroidery and forms of art. Many of school catalogues listed woman’s education to include things like theorem painting and making wax fruit.
Theorem painting uses stencils to paint on velvet, which began at the beginning of the 18th century in England, and then came to America. It was popular in women’s boarding schools. On display will be a fairly large theorem made by Ann Pennypacker (1808-1891) in 1825. Ann was an aunt to the Governor and attended the famous Quaker boarding school of Emmor Kimber at Kimberton, Chester County, PA. Kimber offered watercolors and oil painting at an extra fee. Samuel’s mother and four other aunts attended the Kimber School as well. Theorem painting declined in popularity during the 1840’s.

China painting is another art form specific to an era that became very popular among women at the turn of the 20th century. Governor Pennypacker’s son Bevan married Katharine Stackhouse in 1907. Katharine and her mother Lucinda engaged in this form of art. Pieces by them will be on display.

Philadelphia had a wide variety of art stores to choose from for supplies including Albert B. Cobden, who specialized in China painting. Cobden wrote a small booklet entitled “Practical Hints on China Painting” where in the introduction wrote the following: China painting is a beautiful art, worthy of serious study. Many persons are of the opinion that no particular study is requisite – but as the touch and material are entirely different from those of oil, or water color painting, it is only natural to suppose that a special study is required in order to avoid some of the many difficulties that are encountered in pursuing this art. It is true that china painting is somewhat conventional and may not offer the same facilities for the truthful rendering of nature as oil or water color painting, but beautiful coloring may be executed on china of such transparency and durability as will compensate for other deficiencies. Cobden advertised Firing and Gilding for Amateurs a Specialty.

Above: China painted pitcher by Lucinda Stackhouse in 1903.

Above: Dr. Chevalier Jackson at age 20.

Above: Theorem painting by Ann Pennypacker in 1825.

Above: Katherine Stackhouse Pennypacker in 1910.
Hite sold the property, grist mill, and house in 1730 to John Pawling. John died in 1733 and Henry Pawling inherited the house and a share of the grist mill. In 1747, Henry Pawling sold the house with 500 acres and his share of the mill to Peter Pannebecker. Peter is the first Pennypacker to own the mills and began the long family ownership that lasted until 1980.

Pennypacker Mills became a historic house museum operated by the County of Montgomery, which opened in 1985 offering tours and programs. Today, the site also offers education programs for schools and summer camps, changing exhibits, craft workshops, large scale events, and living history demonstrations. Plan your visit today!

_Talk: "Handicrafts in the Home"
Sunday, March 1  1 pm  Second Floor Galleries

Hear a special presentation on opening day of the new exhibit. See handicrafts made by the Pennypacker family from theorem paintings, embroidery pieces, quilts and more. All ages are welcome to attend this informative talk.

Stay afterward for a guided tour of the Pennypacker mansion. Tours typically take one hour. _Free, suggested donation $2/person._

**300th Anniversary**

Tours of Pennypacker Mills focus on the life and times of Pennsylvania Governor Samuel W. Pennypacker, who bought the Mills in 1900. However, there is another important date that the year 2020 marks.

By 1720, Hans Jost Hite had built a grist mill and part of the current house, so a 300th anniversary. It’s possible that he built the summer kitchen as well, although there is no date for that building.

The original house was described as a two-room up and two-room down structure and was made of grey gneiss stone with raised ridge pointing, display visible in a panel on the second floor hallway.

_Handicrafts in the Home , cont. from Pg. 2._

with colors that could be fired, I felt that I could do satisfactory work. _The pay was by the piece. I was given two dozen glass lamp shades on which winter scenes were to be painted from copies given. These when fired turned out satisfactorily. He continued to work for Mr. Burgun and wrote, I accumulated enough funds to justify entering medical college the following year (1884). Additionally, though I did not know it at the time, the art studies, the oil painting, and the practical work in decorating gave me skill with the brush that was to prove of inestimable value in after life. The facility in drawing in color enabled me to record what I saw through the bronchoscope and to reproduce it for medical illustrations. Dr. Jackson moved from Pittsburgh to Philadelphia in 1916 where he held a chair at the five medical schools, invented or improved over 200 medical instruments. It_ was the skill of a craft that gave him the money to pursue his medical dreams. He was a multitalented artist who did wood turning, wood working, chalk drawings and oil paintings. Some of his china paintings will be on display in the exhibit.

Men also continue to make more practical items such as furniture, which in itself is a form of art. One such individual was Virginia Pennypacker’s brother, Charles Henry Broomall (1852-1924). Charles was a woodworker making furniture, ornate carvings, and picture frames. One noteworthy piece made by him that will be on display is an ornate three tiered stand.

During the Victorian era, crafts were a way to satisfy the need to beautify one’s home and to have a practical and inexpensive hobby to occupy one’s time.
Richard Earley began volunteering at Pennypacker Mills in 2011 and his repertoire of volunteer activities spans almost everything we do here. One of the benefits of being involved with our collections is that he has an incredible store of knowledge about many of the objects in the mansion. He meticulously researches and catalogues obscure and not so obscure objects. This knowledge translates when he gives guided tours. How lucky these folks are!

With few exceptions, Richard helps at our many events including the All Hallow’s Eve Fall Festival. There, he transforms into our Pumpkin Maitre d’ to move families into the pumpkin painting tent in an orderly fashion.

You can also find Richard helping when we decorate for Christmas. Wherever we need help, he’s there. At the Open House, he can be found interpreting a room or thanking families for attending the event at the end of their tour experience.

Richard is always available to help with school field trips and summer camp visits. We are so fortunate that he shares his enthusiasm for the site and its history with these children.

Below are his responses to several questions about his experiences volunteering here. We hope he inspires some of you to consider signing up to volunteer here.

What do you enjoy doing the most?
“I can’t narrow it down to one thing.”

What is your favorite collection item?
“The sixteenth century family bible. I am fascinated that the bible was printed just one century after the Gutenberg bible.”

What would you say to people who are considering volunteering here to encourage them?
“It’s a wonderful place to learn about Pennsylvania history and the involvement of the Pennypacker family. The staff and volunteers are a great group of people to be involved with in the site activities.”

If you are interested in volunteering at the Mills, please give us a call at 610-287-9349. You can offer as much of your time as you wish, choose which events to help with, and which activities you would like to get involved with.
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 Building, 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.

Pre-register me for the Door Knob Workshop! 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

Names of other participants below:

# People Fee Total Enclosed

_____ X $35 = $____________

Send a check made payable to Pennypacker Mills.

Mail to: Pennypacker Mills 5 Haldeman Road, Schwenksville, PA 19473
Dress in your favorite summer fashions to delight in afternoon tea at one of the most picturesque spots in Montgomery County. Enjoy scones, sandwiches, desserts and, of course, tea...all served by our attentive Victorian servants. Entertainment is provided by musician Matthew Dodd who will perform Songs & Stories of the Old West.

Fee: $40 per person, by pre-registration only. Deadline is June 30th. Call 610-287-9349 and reserve your seat at a splendid Victorian experience.

Pre-register me for the Victorian Tea: The Old West. 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

___ X $40 = $__________
# People  Fee  Total Enclosed

Send checks made payable to Pennypacker Mills
Mail to: Pennypacker Mills
5 Haldeman Road, Schwenksville, PA 19473
Easter Workshop for Kids!

Saturday, April 4  1 to 3 pm
Held on the Classroom
Registration deadline Fri., March 27

We’re celebrating Spring and Easter all in one workshop! We have wonderful crafts to hang in your home or share this Spring. There is a beautiful pastel banner that heralds springtime, a sun & cloud hanging, and a 3D spring chick ornament.

We’ll take a refreshment break and play bowling for bunnies too!

Bring along a friend or two for a fun-filled afternoon!

Pre-register me for the Easter 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 #

# People    Fee    Total Enclosed

Email for e-confirmation

Additional friends who will be attending:

Send checks made payable to Pennypacker Mills
Mail to: Pennypacker Mills 5 Haldeman Road, Schwenksville, PA 19473
Springtime at Pennypacker Mills