Christmas time holds a special place in the hearts of those who visit the Mills. The beauty and splendor of the decorations along with the story of how the Pennypacker family celebrated Christmas is what keeps visitors coming back each year!

This year’s theme is loosely based on Charles Dickens’s “A Christmas Carol,” with room decorations featuring the present, past and future of Samuel Pennypacker’s life.

The Formal Parlor starts the journey in 1910, when Samuel & Virginia’s only grandson was born. See over-the-top decorations featuring a beautifully decorated Christmas tree with icicles dangling on branches, gold and red beading, and a mixture of homemade and purchased ornaments.

Holiday Tours:
Tues., Nov. 22 to Sun., Jan. 8, '23

- **Holiday Tours**
  Tues., Nov. 22 to Sun., Jan. 8, ’23
  Free

- **Victorian Christmas Open House**
  Sat., Dec. 10  2-8 pm
  Free

- **Exhibit: The 3-D History of Stereographs and Other Victorian Optical Illusions**
  Thru January 31, 2023
  Free
A Pennsylvania German Putz will be on display—telling the story of the birth of Christ and how families celebrated with this scene each year.

The Library features Charles Dickens’ career as a writer. Samuel Pennypacker had a tradition of reading “A Christmas Carol” to his children each Christmas. The Governor was a fan of Dickens and collected a number of his books. He even saw Dickens perform a reading of several of his works.

Throughout the mansion see floral arrangements, greens weaved with ribbons, and symbolic sweet treats reminiscent of when Samuel, during his term as Governor would give out boxes of chocolates and oranges to the poor children of Harrisburg.

In the Dining Room, see how the Pennypacker family ate extravagantly on Christmas Day. Ideas came from the Ladies Home Journal magazine on how to decorate with over-the-top centerpieces. These influential magazines provided women with ideas for decorating their entire house during the holidays.

Several rooms on the second floor represent Christmas at different times in Samuel’s life; as a child, an adult, and at the end of his life. Each room will have a distinct look. You’ll see handmade ornaments and lamps lit in the 1850s bedroom. The 1910s room will have electric tree lights on a tree and printed wrapping paper.

The entire mansion reflects Christmas traditions throughout the 19th & 20th centuries and explores how Christmas was celebrated.

Plan your visit to Pennypacker Mills this holiday season. Find your Christmas spirit in each and every room. We’re waiting for you!

**Victorian Christmas Open House**

**Sat., Dec. 10  2-8 pm  Free**

Travel through time as you tour Pennypacker Mills during this year’s Victorian Christmas Open House. See decorations used from the early 1850s until the early 1900s—from handmade ornaments to electric Christmas lights. It’s all possible with the help of volunteers, talented musicians, Santa himself and a special historic home where history comes alive.

Meet volunteers and staff as you stop off at each room to hear the story of Christmas at different points in time. It’s a fascinating look at this special holiday, giving visitors the unique experience of comparing holiday traditions of yesteryear and today. Enjoy melodic music from the ‘Bells of Praise’ bell choir as they serenade adults and children alike. Stop by and greet Santa and Mrs. Claus on the mansion porch. In the kitchen, watch a demonstration of clear toy candy making in the kitchen. Using antique 3-D metal molds, these shiny, glass-like sweet treats were a favorite to be found in any child’s Christmas stocking. Finally pick up a cup of warm hot chocolate to enjoy as you walk down the pathway to your car.

*Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!*
Visit the Museum Shop this year!

The Museum Shop is stocked with many vintage inspired ornaments, books, children’s toys, candy, and so much more! Whether you are here for a Holiday Tour or the Open House, a stop at this unique shop affords you a bit of holiday history and a chance to share it with friends and loved ones.

- Pick up a pickle ornament for your tree this year. This old-fashioned ornament recalls a time when they were hidden deep in a Christmas tree so that children would look for the pickle before they ripped open their presents.

- Our felt ornaments belong on every tree or wrapped gift! We have large and small ornaments in the shapes of animals, Santa, and much more.

- Nothing adds glitter and shine like glass icicles! Buy a few or a whole box of these old-fashioned ornaments for your tree.

- Do you remember clear toy candy? Three dimensional, clear candies were what every child wished to find in their stocking. Share this tradition with your children or grandchildren this year.

Taking a cue from our theme of Charles Dicken’s “A Christmas Carol,” we have made ornaments with silhouettes embellished with ribbons and more. Silhouettes were a popular art form in the Victorian era, during which Dickens lived.

On your last stop on the Holiday Tour, why not pick up an ornament and support the work of this historic site? For a $5 donation, select an ornament and hang it on your tree!
Born on November 14, 1872, Josephine was the second child of Samuel and Virginia Pennypacker. Her parents provided Josephine and all her siblings with outstanding academic educations. Josephine and her sisters, Anna and Eliza, all graduated from Friends Central School. Her artistic and musical talents would have made her an excellent candidate for an art or music conservatory, however, women were not accepted at those institutions at the time. Instead, her parents provided her with private music and art lessons. She traveled to Europe with her family where she sketched many landscapes. She and her father, Samuel, traveled to Cuba where she collected artifacts and sketched scenes. Josephine had many interests from playing tennis to performing music on the violin and piano.

“In I find it exceedingly tasteful and pretty. It shows that you have not lost your fondness for art and that you know how much I appreciate your talents in that direction.”
Letter from Samuel W. Pennypacker to Josephine upon receiving a paper cutter, June 12, 1913.

Montgomery County acquired Pennypacker Mills in 1980. In the early 1990’s, the County undertook the cleaning and framing of many of her watercolor, charcoal, and sketches. Many now hang inside the mansion at Pennypacker Mills for visitors to enjoy.

We celebrate Josephine’s 150th Birthday this year!
Upcoming Programs

Traveling on the Perkiomen Railroad
Saturday, Jan. 28th 1:00 pm Free

In the heyday of railroad travel, the Perkiomen Railroad was the connector between Philadelphia and Bethlehem. Join us for a fascinating look at how important this train line was to those in the Perkiomen Valley.

Steve Mallon, President of the Perkiomen Railroad Historic Society will lead this fascinating slide show presentation in the Classroom Building at the Mills.

Valentine Workshop for Kids!
Saturday, Feb. 4 10:00 am to 12:00 pm
Spend a wintry morning at the Mills creating fascinating Valentines to share or decorate your home! Kids, ages 5-10 years old, accompanied by 1 adult are invited to pre-register for this fun workshop held in the Classroom Building.

New Exhibit: The Ladies of Pennypacker Mills
Virginia, Josephine, Eliza, & Anna Maria

Opening Feb. 21 ‘til Sun., Jan. 28, 2024
Each of these women have a fascinating story that continues beyond the Pennypacker family name. Throughout the exhibit, visitors will learn a more intimate story of each of these amazing women through personal belongings such as letters, family scrapbooks, photographs, and so much more! Located on the second floor galleries and included on all free guided tours.
All ages welcome!
Many may remember playing with a ViewMaster as a kid—switching the 3-D images faster than you could even view them! This beloved toy got its start from the original 3-D device known as a stereoscope. Stereography was a common Victorian entertainment. Stereoscopes allow the user to view a pair of separate images as a single 3-D image. It almost feels as though the viewer can reach out and touch the stereo image! You can learn more about the inventors behind the stereoscope and the history that surrounds this device if you visit Pennypacker Mills for a tour!

We invite everyone to dive in and experience the thrill of stereography with Pennypacker Mills’ current exhibit, Stereographing America: A 3-D History of Stereographs.

Above: Wall of stereocards in exhibit gallery. Visitors can use lorgnettes to view in 3-D!