

SELF-GUIDED TOUR OF INTERESTING ARCHITECTURAL CERAMICS SITES IN DOYLESTOWN

SALEM UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

186 E. Court St., Doylestown

Interior / For access call (215) 348-9860

“Bible” tiles by the Moravian Pottery and Tile Works are located in the sanctuary of the church decorating the walls on each side of the altar. There are 55 large and colorful tile panels, among other individual tiles, that depict stories and personalities from the Old and New Testaments. Henry C. Mercer adapted these designs from the low-relief decoration on cast-iron stove plates that originally made up the sides of eighteenth-century heating stoves. The installation was designed and presented to the church in 1928 as a gift from Mercer, who planned the layout of the tiles and supervised the installation, too. Look for the central “Baptism of Christ” panel, especially created by Mercer for this late tile job.

Other examples of Mercer’s “Bible” tiles can be found in Doylestown in the Saloon at Fonthill, Mercer’s residence, and in the Mercer Museum’s original Library Room and in the Stove Plate Room on the 5th level.

SALEM U. C. C. CHRISTIAN EDUCATION BUILDING

181 E. Court St., Doylestown

Interior / For access call (215) 348-9860

Built in 1887 as a private residence, this house has been many things over the last century, including a home for the deaf. It was owned by the Stryker family in 1929 when the very special Moravian tile fireplace facing was added as the focal point of the entry hall, just inside the front door. The theme of the fireplace represents the “Four Seasons” and is carried out in Mercer’s patented mosaic process.

DOYLESTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

127 E. Court St., Doylestown

Exterior only

The final resting place of Henry Chapman Mercer (1856-1930) is here in the Chapman/Mercer family plot in the church’s historic graveyard. Mercer’s white marble tombstone is forever to the right of the church’s main entrance.

ST. PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

84 E. Oakland Ave., Doylestown

Interior / For access call (215) 348-4605

Will Mead's Peace Valley Tile of nearby New Britain, Pennsylvania, created the sanctuary's impressive tile floor during church renovations in 1989-90. In the early 20th century, Henry C. Mercer provided tiles for this church, too. There are two tile mosaics displayed on a wall on the lower level that were originally set into the altar upstairs in 1904. Mercer was a member of this church in his later life.

CLASSIC CIGAR PARLOR

12 N. Main St., Doylestown

Interior / For access visit store or call (215) 348-2880

A series of five large, low-relief tile panels made from plaster molds cast from eighteenth-century stove plates are set into the stucco walls of the large room upstairs. They represent Biblical stories of Cain and Abel, Joseph and Potiphar's Wife, and the Dance of Death, as well as Mercer's Tile of Jahn Pot and Tile of S. F. They are rare, early tiles made in 1901 by the Moravian Pottery and Tile Works for what originally was the Grill Room of the Fountain House Hotel (now a Starbuck's).

CHAMBERS 19 BISTRO & BAR

19 N. Main St., Doylestown

Interior / For access visit restaurant or call (215) 348-1940

Katia McGuirk designed and made the playful tile mural that fills the main wall of the dining room in the back of the restaurant. It focuses on the local flavor of Doylestown and has two oval tile panels that highlight the borough's notable scenery. It was completed in 2006.

STAR GARDEN PARK

Printers Alley, between E. Court St. and E. State St., Doylestown

Exterior only

A small oasis of tiles and wonder tucked away in the center of town, this little park is centered around an old sweet gum tree and a wall of beautiful tiles. It is an early, important mural by Katia McGuirk and was completed in 2001-02.

FREEDOM SQUARE

Pine Street, between E. Court St. and E. State St., Doylestown

Exterior only

Freedom Square is a patriotic pocket park dedicated to the memory of Travis Manion and Colby Umbrell and all fallen heroes. The tiles and mosaics were created by Doylestown's own, Katia McGuirk. It was dedicated in September 2009. Badly damaged a couple of years ago, the main wall and bell still await restoration.

BUCKS COUNTY JUSTICE CENTER

100 N. Main St., Doylestown

Interior / Open to public; for further info call 1-888-942-6528

If you can get through security, you will find installations of recently made Moravian tiles in this monstrous, newly constructed building. Set into the main wall of each level's elevator lobby is a colorful round mosaic surrounded by a large field of quarry tiles. Each roundel represents a different episode in the history of Bucks County, like "Washington Crossing the Delaware" or the "Chapman Boys." Originally created by Henry C. Mercer in 1914 as decorative accents in the ceiling of the Library Room at the Mercer Museum, the ones here were produced in 2014 by the Moravian Pottery and Tile Works from original drawings and plaster molds in their historic collection. There is also an impressive frieze of small "brocade" tile panels set into wall of the second floor. These designs represent symbols of all the different townships in Bucks County and were also originally designed by Mercer for the Library Room at the museum.

When the Justice Center was built it absorbed an historic armory that faced Shewell Avenue. If you go into the café on the main floor and head all the way to the back, you will find a large Moravian tile fireplace that is in its original location that was the old armory section. This fireplace, with its medieval-style knights on horseback and its special keystone panel, dates to 1910 and was saved and protected during all the new construction around it.

STATIONS OF THE CROSS PRAYER GARDEN

Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church

235 E. State St. (directly across Maple Ave.), Doylestown

Exterior only

The chief feature of this prayer garden is a series of fourteen rectangular plaques designed and made by William R. Mercer, Jr. (1862-1939), the younger brother of Henry C. Mercer. "Willie" Mercer was a trained sculptor and craftsman for many years operated Ornamental Concrete Works, his small studio/company that specialized (mostly) in concrete garden fixtures. Each stylized scene represents one of the traditional

“Stations of the Cross.” They are low-relief, cast concrete and enriched with glass smalti in white, red and gold, against a vibrant royal blue background. The plaques were made for the original Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church at an unknown date probably before 1920 and were removed in the 1960s before that old church was demolished to make way for the present one. Discovered in the church’s basement in the early 1990s, the plaques were repurposed and set into their present brick structures to be contemplated by all.

ALDIE MANSION

85 Old Dublin Pike, Doylestown

Exterior only / For interior access call (215) 345-7020

If you are planning to see this site on Friday, May 19th, please conclude your visit by 2:00 pm. Aldie has a rental later that afternoon and access will be prohibited.

This three-story Tudor Revival style mansion was built in 1927 for the brother of Henry Chapman Mercer, William Robert Mercer, Jr., and his wife, Martha Dana Mercer. It replaced the original Italianate-style Aldie built on the grounds in 1872 for Mercer’s aunt, Elizabeth Chapman Lawrence. The exterior façade displays an extravagant use of bricks set to create an exciting effect of color, pattern and texture. The roofline is punctuated with elaborate brick chimney stacks. Persian tiles dating to the early 20th century are set throughout the site, accenting the area around the front door, on walls of the back terrace and on the rich, red brick wall in the far corner of the garden.

There are many unique features to see throughout the grounds that were created in concrete and colorful glass smalti by William Mercer in his characteristic style. There are fountains, benches, planters, columns, pedestals, arches, etc., mostly adapted from ancient Greek, Roman or Byzantine sources. An elaborate concrete loggia is prominent near the main entrance now but was originally a structure in the estate’s extensive gardens. It was rescued and moved to its present location many years ago. Near the parking lot, where the site’s original in-ground swimming pool was once located, you will find an ornate water spout with high-relief dolphins against a background of blue and green glass mosaic. Another one depicting a lion’s head is now installed as a water feature in the “Tea Garden.” Don’t miss the pet cemetery on the north side of the garage, with its 18 concrete tombstones honoring beloved Mercer family dogs, cats, horses, and “Cockey,” a rose-breasted cockatoo.

Walk the path leading to the gardens behind the house and you will see an ancient bur oak with its spreading canopy in the center of the lawn. This tree holds the title for the widest span in Pennsylvania, measuring in at over 75 feet. The centerpiece of the terrace of the main house is William Mercer’s imposing three-tiered fountain made of concrete set with cast panels based on early Byzantine sculpture. The basin is lined with turquoise glazed tiles made by the Enfield Pottery and Tile Works – his brother’s major tile competitor!