



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Friday, July 26, 2024

Startling Doan Gang Cave Discovery To Be Displayed at Mercer Museum

DOYLESTOWN, Pa. – A stone with the inscription “1775 M” – possibly carved by the famous outlaw Moses Doan – has been recovered from Buckingham Cave, ending a search that millions of television viewers witnessed on a recent episode of the Discovery Channel’s *Expedition Unknown*. Additionally, a colonial-era bottle, also recovered from the cave, is the first object found that dates to the period of the Doan Gang and suggests that the cave was open when Moses Doan and the Gang were active.

Clint Flack, Bucks County Historical Society Exhibit Specialist, along with property owner Frank Lamitina, rediscovered and excavated Buckingham Cave beginning in 2019. The story received local news coverage and eventually piqued the interest of producers at the Discovery Channel’s hit show, *Expedition Unknown*.

In the recent one-hour episode featuring the Doan Gang story that premiered on the Discovery Channel on July 3, 2024, called “Traitors’ Treasure of 1776, Flack and *Expedition Unknown*’s Josh Gates visit the Mercer Museum, operated by the Bucks County Historical Society, and search for the inscription in the cave.

Excavations at the cave continued after filming, and Flack and Lamitina, along with Mercer Museum librarian Rayna Polsky, uncovered the “1775 M” carving and the colonial bottle on a subsequent search.

According to local legend, members of the Doan Gang hid – and possibly buried treasure – in caves, and this story has inspired generations of locals to search for the cave and initials.

The stone with the inscription confirms a sensational newspaper story from over 160 years ago. In January 1859, local schoolteacher Joseph Fell wrote to the *Bucks County Intelligencer* to announce that his son and several friends had descended into Buckingham Cave on Christmas Eve. There they found the inscription “1775 M. DOAN” carved into one of the walls. Joseph Fell then visited the cave and saw the initials himself. The cave was filled in with dirt and debris sometime after Fell’s visit, starting in the 1860s.

Moses Doan was a member of the infamous "Doan Gang," a network of Loyalists in Bucks County who supported Great Britain during the Revolutionary War. The Gang robbed tax collectors, militia members, and other citizens who supported the revolutionary cause. Moses Doan was ultimately killed in shoot-out at a cabin along Tohickon Creek in 1783.

Clint Flack called the discovery “his life’s dream” and adds, “I grew up reading about this cave and this alleged inscription, and to actually find it has just been incredible. The inscription leaves open the possibility that Moses Doan may have actually been in this cave. We may ultimately never know for sure, but just finding these pieces of evidence suggests intriguing possibilities.”

Rediscovering the cave and the inscription has not been an easy road.

“We found the ‘1775 M’ stone deep in the cave, near the chamber when Josh Gates and I were digging on the show,” Flack said. “It was part of a pile of debris that had fallen off the wall over the years. It was actually Frank Lamitina who saw the carving on a stone lifted out of a bucket and said, ‘Hey, is this something?’ It was just the most amazing moment.”

The newly discovered stone and colonial bottle will be unveiled to the public for the first time this Sunday, July 28, 2024 at a special Mercer Museum community program called, “Outlaws in the Underworld: Bucks County Caves and the Doan Gang,”.

Limited tickets remain for this in-person program, and the Mercer Museum will offer it again on Monday, August 5, 2024 via Zoom for global audiences or those unable to attend Saturday’s event. Tickets and program information are available at doangang.org.

In the near future, the stone with the inscription and the bottle will be on display as part of the Mercer Museum's exhibition *The Doan Gang: Outlaws of the Revolution*, open to the public until December 2026.

SPECIAL PROGRAM DETAILS:

Outlaws in the Underworld: Bucks County Caves and the Doan Gang

Sunday, July 28, 2024 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Location: Mercer Museum Elkins Gallery

Admission: \$20 General Admission/\$15 BCHS Members

Tickets at doangang.org/programs

Did the notorious Doan Gang really hide out in Bucks County caves while they were on the run at the time of the American Revolution?

Join Mercer Museum researchers at this exclusive presentation and hear the untold stories of the team's explorations of Bucks County caves with the cast and crew of the Discovery Channel's blockbuster hit *Expedition Unknown*.

This program unravels Doan myths and legends and unveils the latest active findings on Doan Gang hideouts, secret caves, and the unique geological and historical landscapes of Bucks County.

The Doan Gang: Outlaws of the Revolution exhibition is sponsored by Cascade Foundation, Philadelphia Funder Collaborative for the Semiquincentennial, Susan E. Kane, Jim & Kathy Morrison, Connelly Foundation, The Morel Family Foundation, Bucks County Tourism Grant Program, Doan Distillery, The Argus Fund, Penn Color, Janet Schimek, Molly Lowell & Rich Duvall, Brian & Louise McLeod, Bob & Alice Vernon, Bucks County Foundation, The First National Bank & Trust Co. of Newtown, Linda B. Hodgdon, The London Purchase Farm, Dynasty Advisors, and Fulton Bank.

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About the Mercer Museum & Fonthill Castle

Located in Doylestown, Bucks County, PA, the Mercer Museum and Fonthill Castle are historic castles celebrating the legacy of Henry Chapman Mercer (1856-1930), American archaeologist, anthropologist, ceramicist and scholar. Both sites are operated by the Bucks County Historical Society (BCHS).

The Mercer Museum, one of Bucks County's premier cultural attractions and a Smithsonian affiliate, features both local and national seasonal exhibits as well as a core museum collection of over 17,000 pre-Industrial tools. This permanent collection offers visitors a unique window into pre-Industrial America through sixty different crafts and trades and is one of the world's most comprehensive portraits of American material culture. The museum also features a research library that is a center for local history related to Bucks County and the surrounding region, with its roots dating back to the founding of the Bucks County Historical Society in 1880.

Fonthill Castle was built between 1908-1912 and was the home of Henry Chapman Mercer. Mercer built Fonthill Castle as his residence and showplace for his collection of tiles and prints. The castle serves as an early example of reinforced concrete and features forty-four rooms, over two hundred windows, and eighteen fireplaces. Fonthill Castle's interior features Mercer's renowned, hand-crafted ceramic tiles designed at the height of the Arts and Crafts movement.

The Mercer Museum is located at 84 South Pine Street, Doylestown, PA, 18901. Fonthill Castle is located at 525 East Court Street in Doylestown, PA, 18901.

The Mercer Museum & Fonthill Castle are open Tuesdays – Sundays from 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. For up-to-date ticket and schedule information, please visit mercermuseum.org.

About Mercer Museum *The Doan Gang: Outlaws of the Revolution* Exhibition

The Doan Gang: Outlaws of the Revolution explores the history and intrigue of a group of Revolutionary War-era Loyalists whose legend lives on today. Some called them villains; others hailed them as heroes. Guests will discover the untold stories of the Doan Gang and journey through a world of espionage, legendary robberies, and mythical lost treasure in the heart of Revolutionary Bucks County.

The Doan Gang: Outlaws of the Revolution investigates the extraordinary tales of the Gang's criminal exploits throughout the region and explores the conflicts that arose among neighbors, friends, and families in Bucks County who were forced to choose sides during a time of great political and social unrest.

This exhibition offers audiences an opportunity to “step into” historical sets and imagine life in Revolutionary Bucks County. This major exhibition features over 300 artifacts, documents, and images from a variety of private collections and institutions, including the Bucks County Historical Society, the

Library of Congress, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Newtown Historic Association, the Plumstead Historical Society, and many others.

Never before displayed together, a few legendary highlights of the exhibition include the original desk from the infamous Bucks County Treasury robbery in Newtown in 1781, the flintlock pistol found at the site of the Halsey's Cabin shoot-out in 1783, and the grave marker of Moses Doan placed by Henry Mercer in Plumstead Township in 1888.

This exhibition explores the conflicted loyalties of everyday people in Bucks County at the heart of the American Revolution. It coincides with the United States of America Semiquincentennial, the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States in 1776. The commemoration is a national, multi-year initiative culminating on July 4, 2026, and officially concluding in 2027.

America250PA

The Bucks County Historical Society is a Nonprofit Affiliate of America250PA. America250PA hopes to engage all citizens of the commonwealth, from all 67 counties, with the goal to educate, preserve, innovate, and celebrate Pennsylvania's rich history, culture and future through various programs, projects, and events. Learn more at america250pa.org.

For additional information, please contact:

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