

Reading Public Museum
500 Museum Road, Reading, PA 19611

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****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****
**A CULTURAL CELEBRATION OF PENNSYLVANIA GERMAN ART
OPENS AT READING PUBLIC MUSEUM**

Reading, Pa — May 3, 2010 — *A Cultural Celebration: Arts of the Pennsylvania Germans from a Berks County Private Collection*, opens at the Reading Public Museum on Saturday, June 12, 2010, and will be on view through Sunday, September 26, 2010. Featuring selections from a local private collection focused on the craftsmen and objects illustrating the traditional heritage of the Pennsylvania Germans, this exhibition includes nearly 100 works of art in a variety of media, dating largely from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Showcased are works of art on paper, textiles, metals, furniture and ceramics. These examples illuminate the vibrant diversity of Germanic folk arts in Pennsylvania and reveal the influence of various cross-cultural traditions.

Programming for the exhibition will include a gallery talk by guest curator, Louisa Bartlett, on Friday, June 25 at 4 p.m. followed by a Members Opening Reception from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Additional programming will be offered in September in conjunction with the reopening of the Arts of Southeastern Pennsylvania Gallery at the Museum.

Many objects in this exhibition display an exuberance in decoration that is often found among works by the Pennsylvania Germans who loved to embellish even utilitarian forms. Glazed red earthenware plates, for example, often served not only a functional purpose but were also celebratory objects presented and sometimes inscribed to commemorate important events such as marriages or anniversaries. Other ceramic pieces such as small figures of animals or birds are delightful and whimsical expressions. The

skill of the craftsman can also be seen in the intricate construction of sugar bowls and pipe holders. Examples of the work of a number of Berks County potters such as Willoughby Smith and Henry Fahr are featured in the show. Furniture forms included in the exhibition include storage chests, the shrank or cupboard, and brightly painted fancy or Windsor chairs from southeastern and central Pennsylvania.

The technical skill of Pennsylvania artisans in metals is demonstrated in the exhibition through pieces of pewter by such accomplished eighteenth century craftsmen as William Will of Philadelphia and Johan Christoph Heyne of Lancaster. Also displayed are pieces by notable Berks County nineteenth century metalsmiths including several types of brass fat-burning lamps made by Peter Derr of Tulpehocken Township and wrought iron by David Rohrer of Lebanon County.

Among the great strengths of the collection are the works of art on paper. These include not only portraits of Berks County subjects by watercolor artists such as Jacob Maentel, but also an impressive group of fraktur drawings, birth and baptismal certificates, writing samples, valentines, and broadsides. Many of these were hand-lettered and decorated by known fraktur artists and scribes while others were printed and have hand-drawn or printed decoration.

The Reading Public Museum is supported in part by grants from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts and the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.

The Reading Public Museum is located at 500 Museum Road, Reading, PA 19611. Hours are Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Saturday 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Friday 11 a.m. to 8 p.m.; and Sunday 12 to 5 p.m. Admission to the Museum is: \$8 adults (18-59), \$6 children/seniors/students (w/ID) and free to Members and children under four years old.

Web: www.readingpublicmuseum.org

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