



Broken and Beautiful: Pennsylvania German Fraktur Folk Art

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Fraktur, Johann Heinrich
Otto, ca 1770-1800



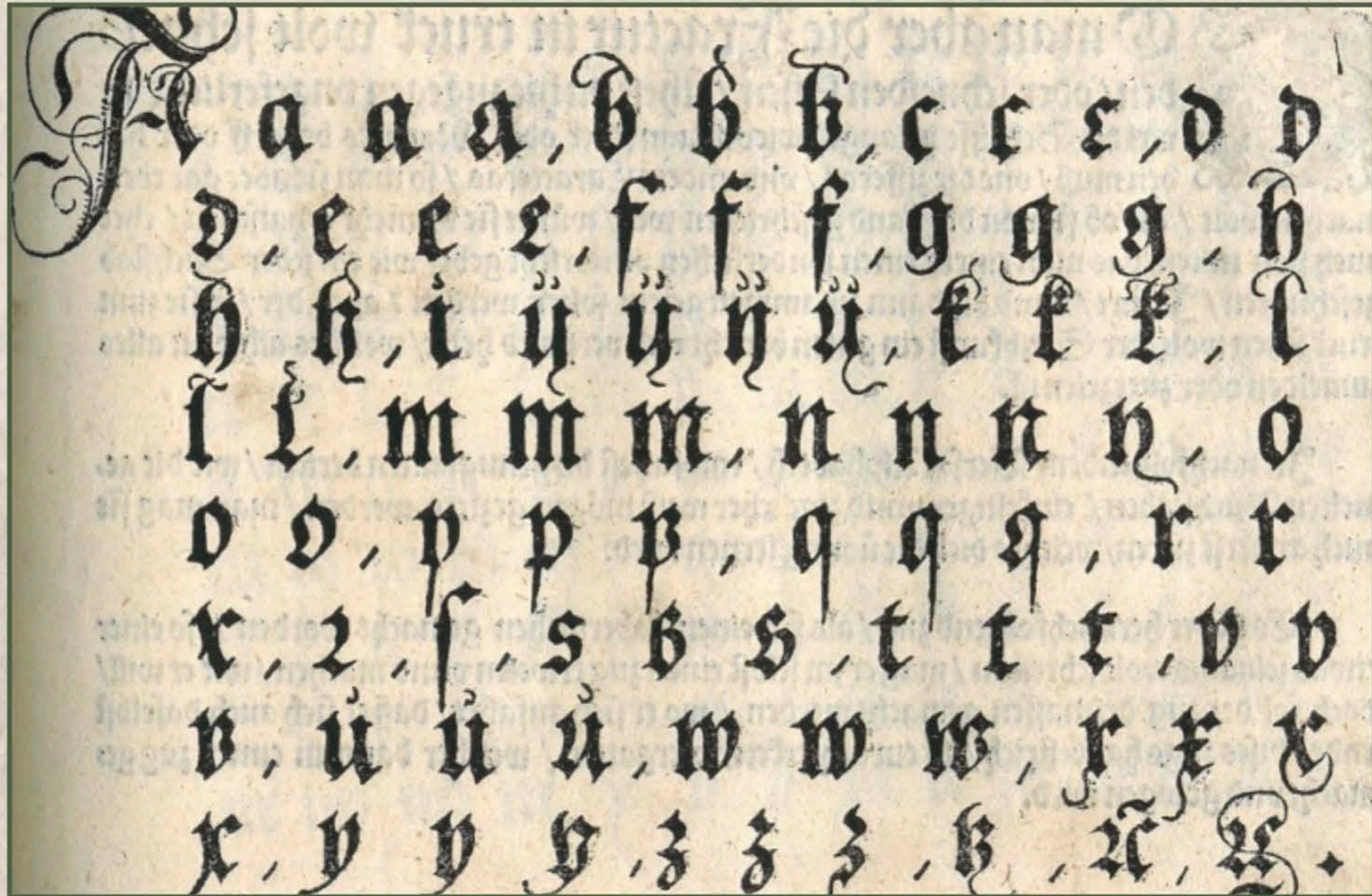
Exhibit Description



In simplest terms, Fraktur is a calligraphic font named for its broken or “fractured” appearance. Fraktur was created in 16th century northern Germany and is one of several varieties of Blackletter or Gothic script. Germans immigrating to Pennsylvania brought Fraktur script to their new homeland in the 1700s and 1800s and used it to create folk art manuscripts. Fraktur is now used to describe this type of Pennsylvania German folk art that consists mainly of family documents such as birth, baptismal, and marriage certificates. The Free Library of Philadelphia in coordination with the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and The National Gallery of Art invites exhibit visitors into the lives of Pennsylvania Germans during the founding years of our country through an intimate encounter with Fraktur Folk Art.

The Fraktur Font

There are four Blackletter or Gothic fonts: Fraktur, Schwabacher, Textura, and Rotunda. The origins of Fraktur, also spelled Fractur, are disputed. The term is shortened from Frakturschriften, or Fraktur Writings and is from the Latin word for fracture or broken. Fraktur was created in Germany to accompany Albrecht Drurer's drawings. It was a common typeface used in Germany for hundreds of years. The Gutenberg Bible was printed in Fraktur. After a decline in the 20th century, it was adopted by the Nazi regime. However, in 1941 the regime banned the use of Fraktur in favor of Antiqua claiming, falsely, Fraktur to be "Judenlettern" or Jewish letters.



Fraktur Example, Wolfgang Fugger, 1533



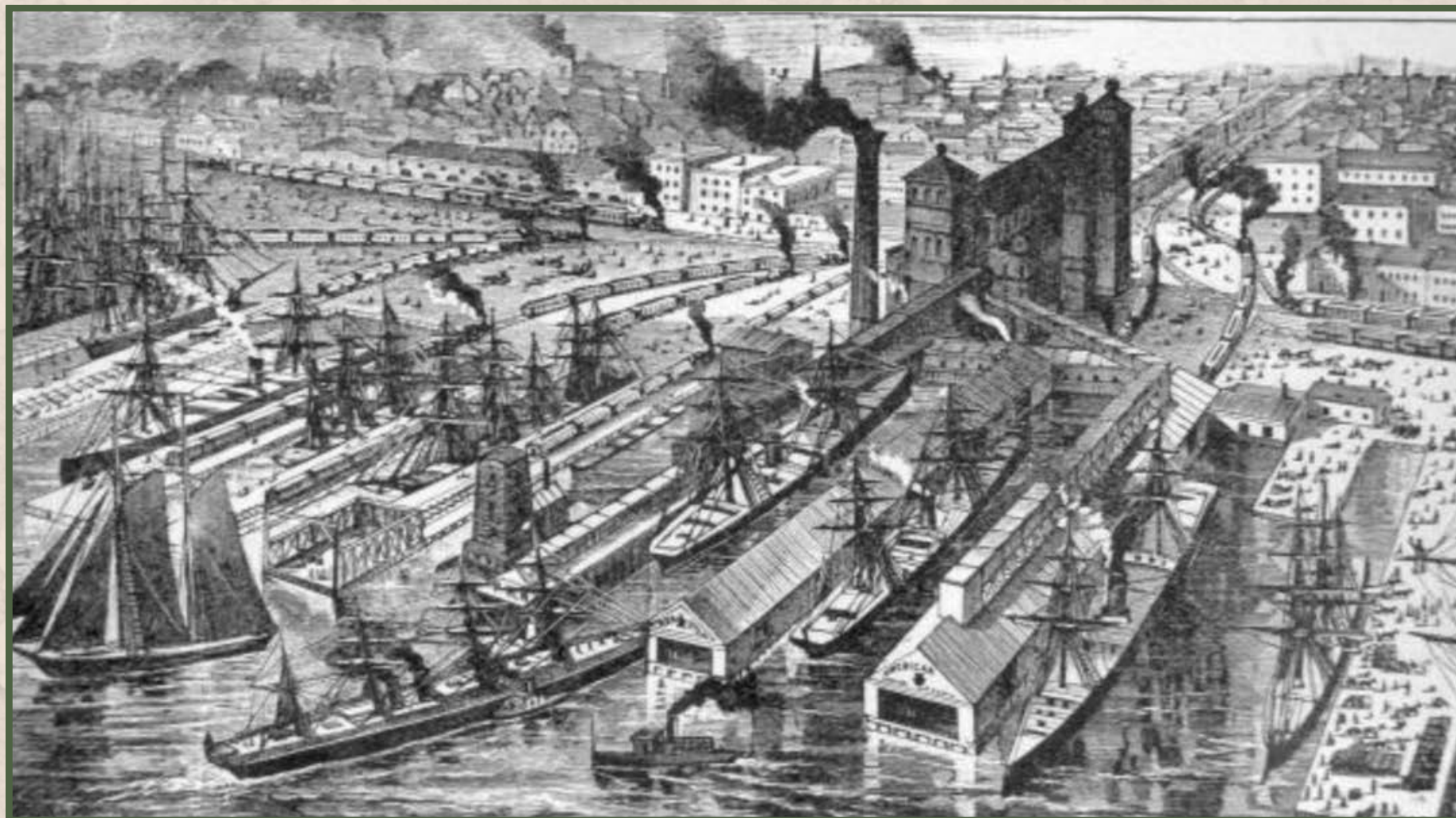
From Birth and Baptismal Certificate of Johannes Bender, ca 1784



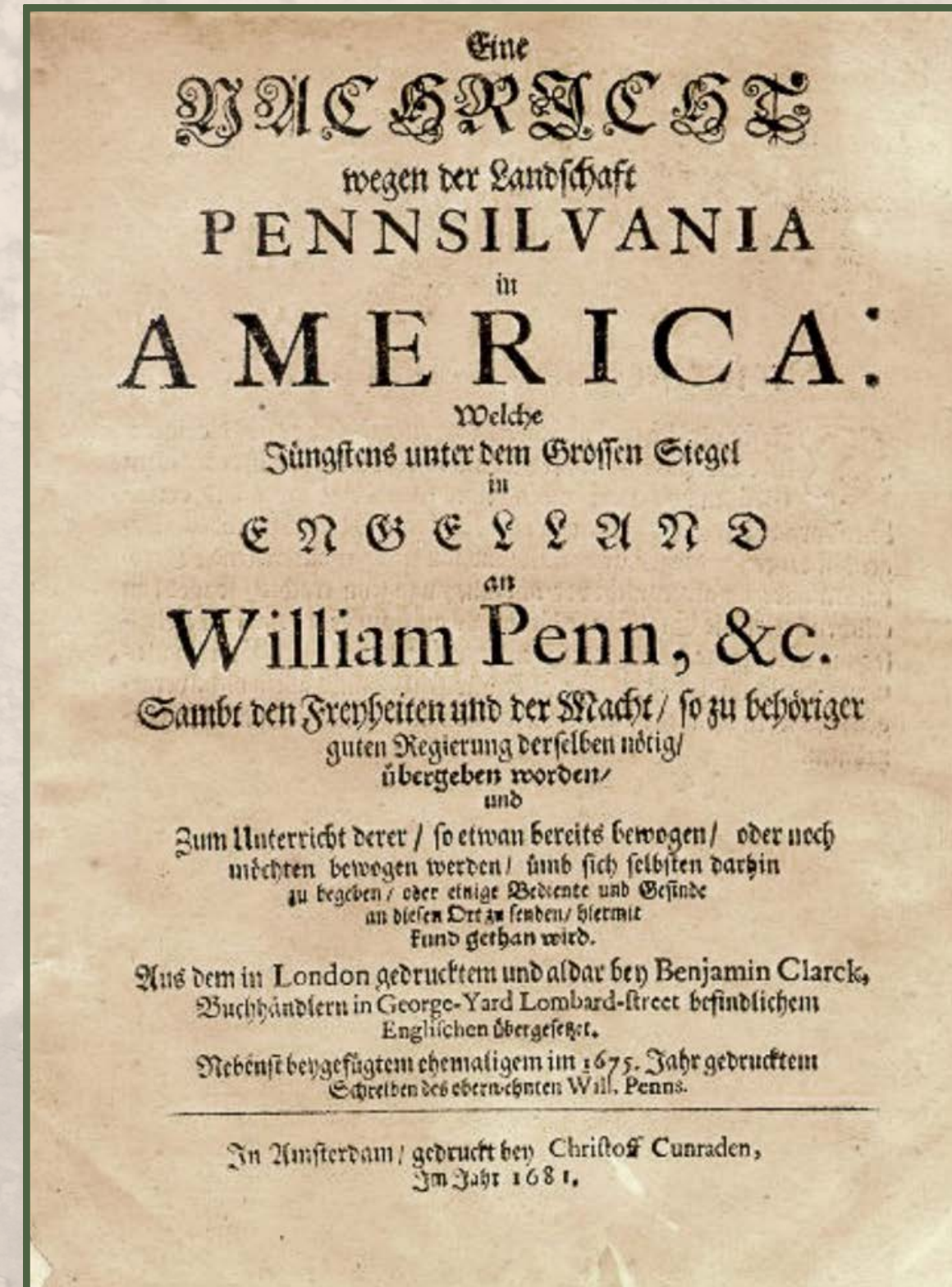
The Immigration of Germans to Pennsylvania

Exhibit Items, clockwise from top left:

1. Portrait of William Penn
2. Title page, German language version of William Penn's "Some Account of the Province of Pennsylvania in America" 1681.
3. Pennsylvania Railroad station and docks, 1887.



William Penn, founder of Pennsylvania, traveled to Germany in 1677. He espoused the religious freedom that could be found in his new settlement in America to persecuted religious groups. The Amish, Mennonites, Quakers and others immigrated to what is now known as Philadelphia. The journey was arduous, and many died crossing the Atlantic. In order to pay for their trip, many of these immigrants offered themselves as indentured servants. The first German settlement in Pennsylvania was comprised of 13 Mennonite families, led by Franz Pastorius, in 1683.



The Birth of Fraktur Folk Art



Exhibit Item

5. Paradisiacal Wonder Music (Paradisiches Wunder-Spiel) Johann Conrad Beissel, 1754



Personal records such as birth, baptismal, and marriage certificates were recorded in Germany using Fraktur calligraphic lettering. German immigrants brought the skills to create these documents to their new country. It was the Pennsylvania Germans, however, who illuminated these documents, taking inspiration from their new surrounds by decorating them with birds, flowers, hearts, angels, and leaves in primary colors. The Ephrata Cloister, a religious community founded by Johann Conrad Beissel in 1732, is said to have produced the first pieces of Fraktur Folk Art.

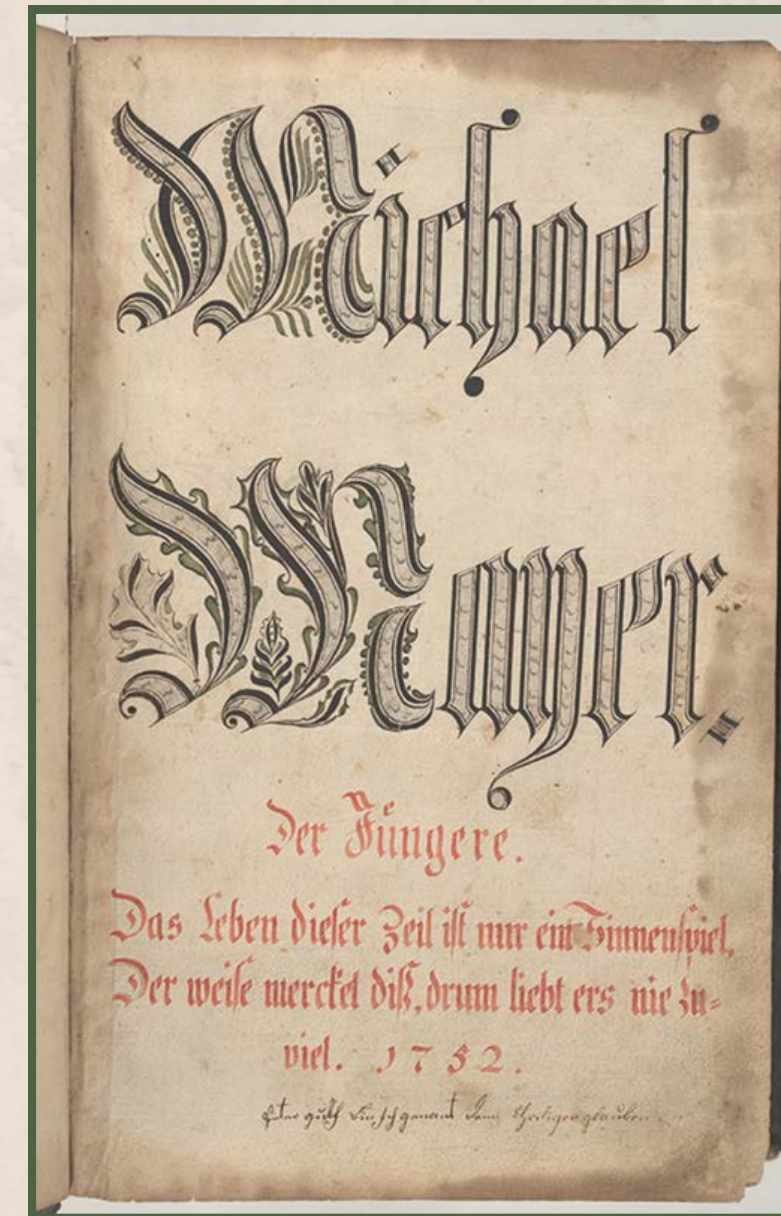


Exhibit Item

6. Bookplate (Bücherzeichen) for Michael Mayer (Ephrata Cloister), 1752

Birth and Baptismal Certificates

Geburtsschein



Exhibit Item

7. Birth and Baptismal Certificate. Johann Heinrich Otto, 1782



Exhibit Item

8. Birth and Baptismal Certificate for Catherine Wehr. 1816



Exhibit Item

9. Birth and Baptismal Certificate for Caroline Matilda Transu. John W. Stover, 1821

Marriage Certificates

Trauschein



Exhibit Item

10. Marriage Certificate for Maria Stüwer and Johannes Spriegel. Daniel Stephen Horn, 1839



Exhibit Item

11. Marriage Certificate for Johannes Stozer and Ehlisabeth Stimmes. Anonymous, 1777



Exhibit Item

12. Marriage Certificate for Johannes Schuhmacher and Margaretha Staib. John H. Gnertler, ca. 1863

Bookplates Bücherzeichen



Exhibit Item
13. Bookplate for Esther Sauder. Samuel W. Weaver, 1824



Exhibit Item
14. Bookplate for Esther Kolb. David Kulp, 1813



Exhibit Item
15. Bookplate for Abraham Landes. Johann Adam Eyer, 1780

Broadsides Breitseiten



Exhibit Item

16.The life and age of mankind. (Das Leben und Alter der Menschen). Moser and Peters, 1826



Exhibit Item

17. Adam and Eve in paradise (Adam und Eva, im Paradies) Villee H. W., 1817

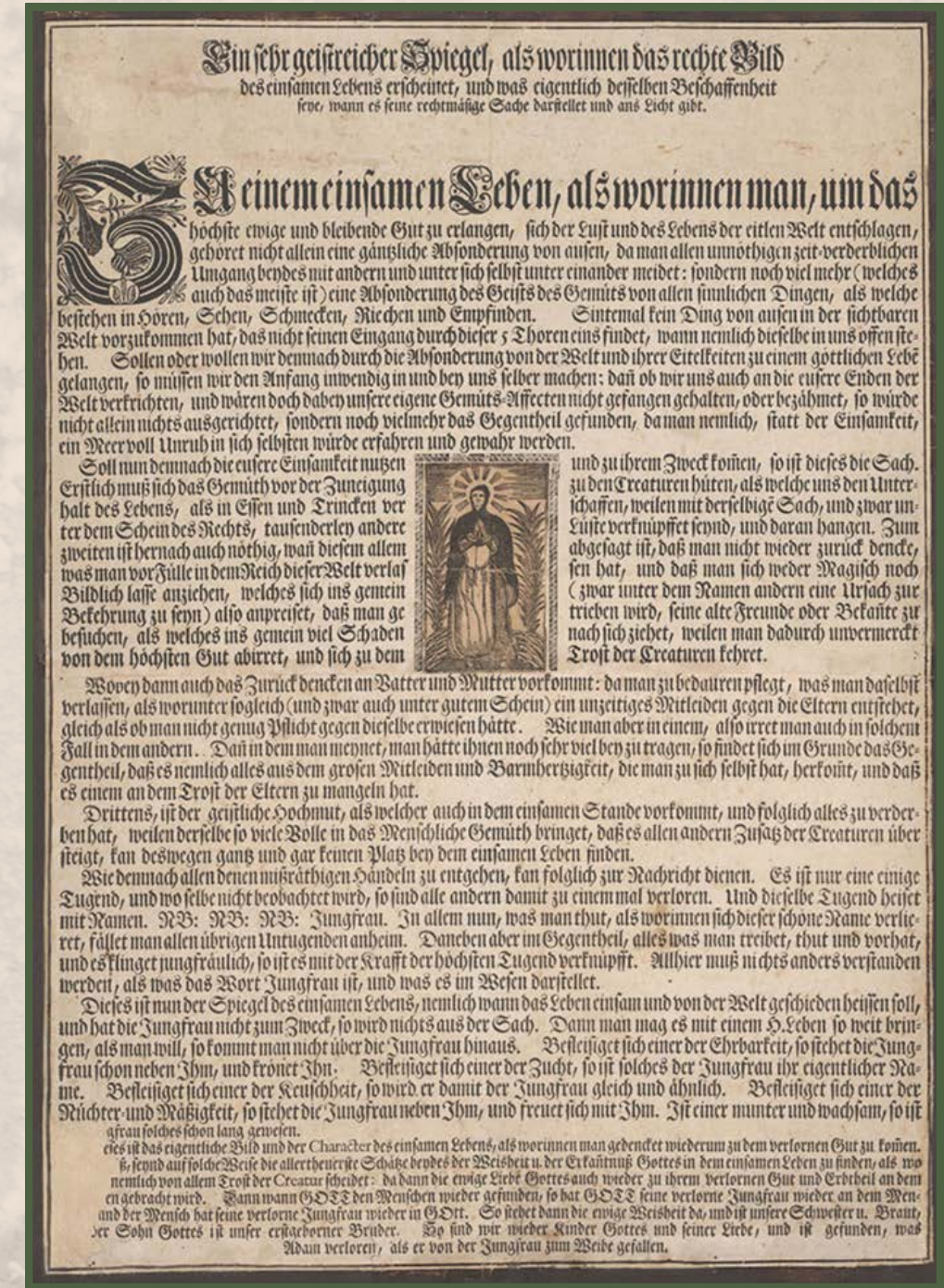


Exhibit Item

18. A veritable spiritual mirror... (Ein sehr geistreicher Spiegel...) Israel Eckerlin, 1745

Love Tokens and Valentines

Liebesbrief



Exhibit Item

19. Love Token. Anonymous, ca. 1800

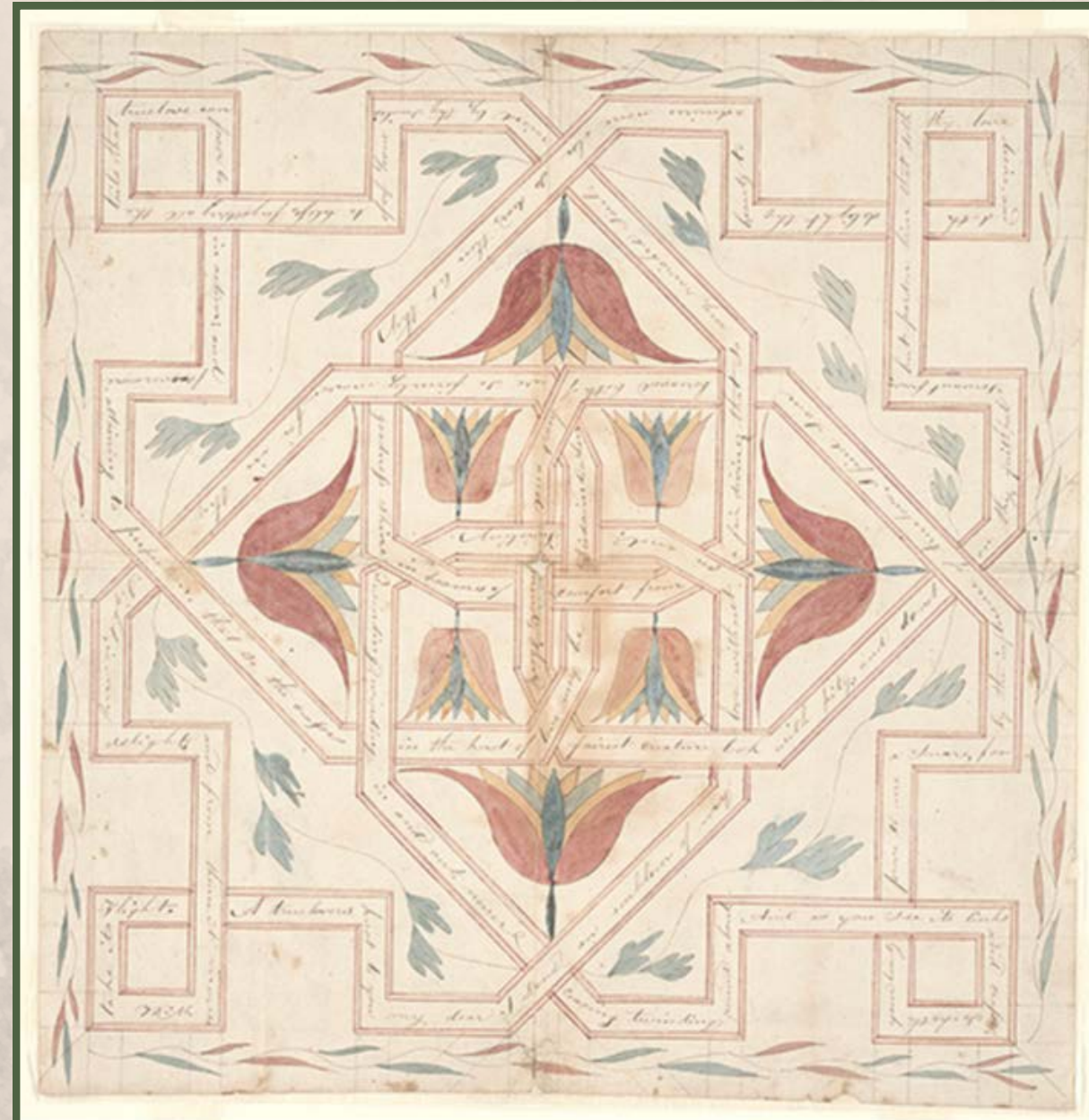


Exhibit Item

20. A True Lover's Knot. Anonymous, 1850



Exhibit Item

21. Valentine Anonymous, ca. 1800

Religious Art religiöse Kunst

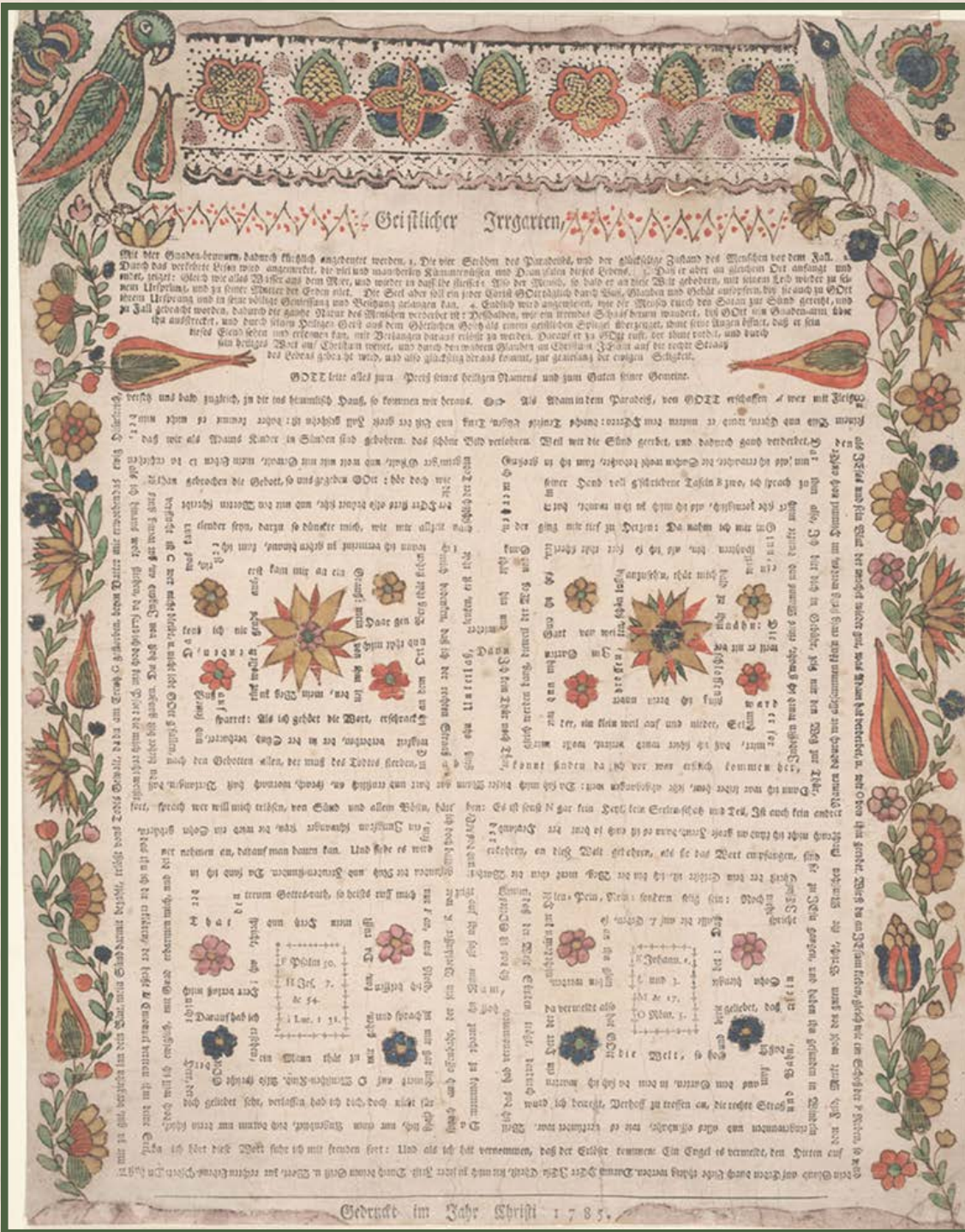


Exhibit Item

22. Spiritual Labyrinth (Geistlicher Irrgarten).
Henrich Otto, 1785



Exhibit Item

23. God, you are so rich today (Gott, du bist noch heut so reich).
Christian Beschler, 1799



Exhibit Item

24. Religious Text (Should I now build on men (solt ich nun auf Menschen bauen))
Johannes Mayer, ca. 1800

Household Objects

Haushaltsgegenstände



Exhibit Item
25. Oval scalloped pottery. Samuel Troxel, 1823.

Exhibit Item
26. Hooked rug. Anonymous, n.d.



Exhibit Item
27. Dower Chest. Anonymous, 1786

BETTY JEAN DAVIS

Hymnals Gesangbuch



Exhibit Item

28. Members of Snow Hill Cloister Scriptorium (Das Gesäng der einsamen und verlassenen Turtel-Taube by Snow Hill Cloister). Members of Snow Hill Cloister, 1886



Exhibit Item

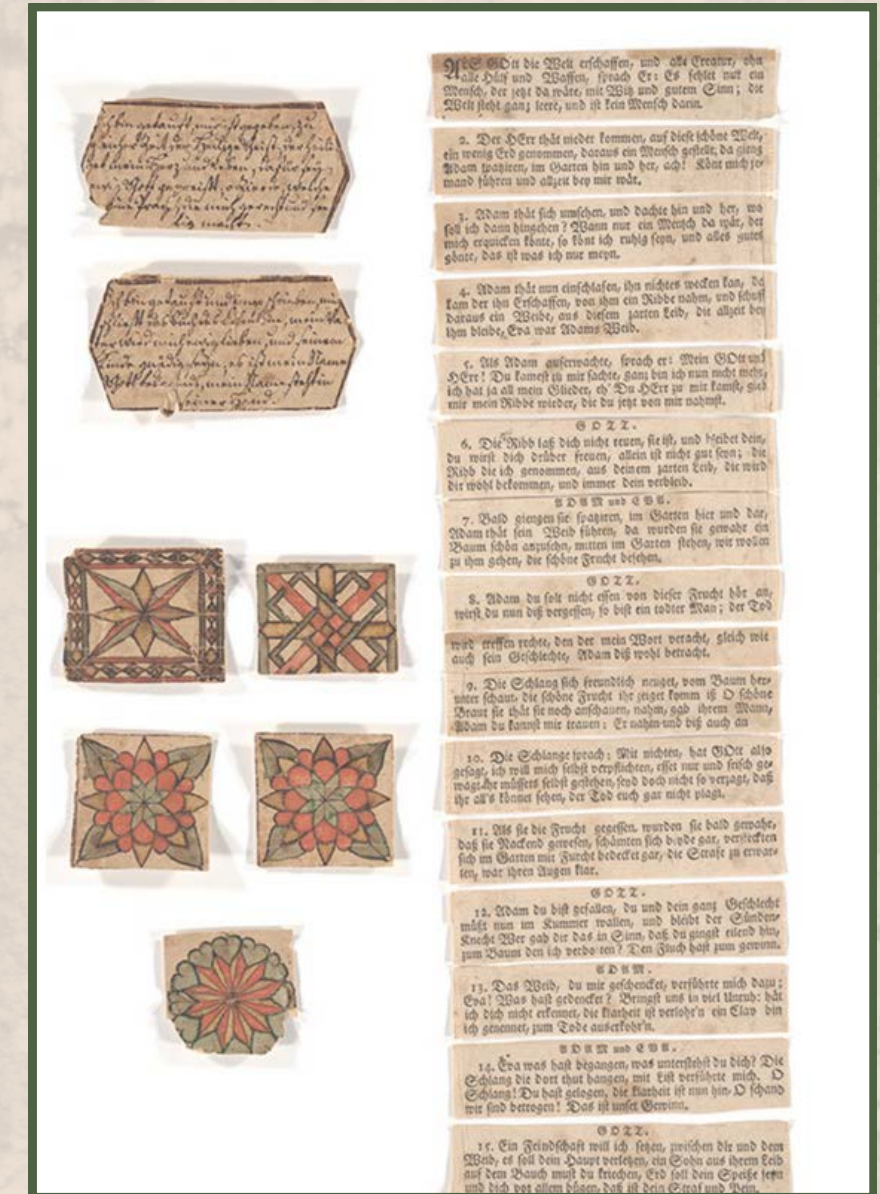
29. Tune Booklet (Notenbüchlein))
Johann Adam Eyer, 1780

Fraktur Artist's Toolkit



Exhibit Item

30. Fraktur Artist's Toolkit. ca. 1820



1. Adam thät sich umsehen, und dachte hin und her, wo soll ich denn hingehen? Adam war ein Mensch da war, der mich erquicket hatte: so kam ich nachs Gen, und alles gantz gantz, das ist was ich mir mein.
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"As an art form, fraktur is graphic art, two-thirds calligraphy, and one-third drawn symbol. The combination of calligraphic text, abstract borders and primitive symbolic figures, makes up a total which is more than the sum of its parts." Don Yoder (Rubin, 2006)



Free Library of Philadelphia Parkway
Central Branch



Philadelphia Museum of Art

Exhibit Promotion



Metropolitan Museum of Art



National Gallery of Art

The Free Library of Philadelphia's Parkway Central branch will celebrate its 100th anniversary June 2, 2027. This exhibit will travel to the collaborating institutions and end its tour for the anniversary celebration. Each of these institutions features their own significant Fraktur collection. The exhibit will be promoted via social media, e-mail, and promotional mailers to the list of members of each institution.

Exhibit Catalog

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2. Explore PA History. (2023). The German Society of Pennsylvania Historical Marker. Explorepahistory.com. <https://explorepahistory.com/hmarker.php?markerId=1-A-150>
3. Explore PA History (2023) Washington Avenue Immigration Historical Marker <https://explorepahistory.com/hmarker.php?markerId=1-A-3D7>
4. Anonymous (Ephrata Cloister) - Decorator, Anonymous (Ephrata Cloister) - Scrivener. (ca. 1750). A heart which Renounces World and Time (Ein Herz das Welt und Zeit verachtet). (Manuscripts). Retrieved from <https://libwww.freelibrary.org/digital/item/6663>
5. (1754). Paradiesches Wunder-Spiel. (Letterpress Prints). Retrieved from <https://libwww.freelibrary.org/digital/item/42093>
6. (Ephrata Cloister) - Scrivener, (Ephrata Cloister) - Decorator. (1752). Bookplate (Bücherzeichen) for Michael Mayer. (Manuscripts). Retrieved from <https://libwww.freelibrary.org/digital/item/7179>
7. John Heinrich Otto (1782) Birth and Baptismal Certificate of Johannes Scheffer (Manuscripts) Retrieved from https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/534?what=Frakturs&ao=on&ft=* &offset=0&rpp=20&pos=12
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9. John W. Stover, The Color Block Artist - Decorator, stover - Decorator. Birth and Baptismal Certificate for Caroline Matilda Transu (b. 1821).. (Manuscripts). Retrieved from <https://libwww.freelibrary.org/digital/item/66109>
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11. Anonymous - Decorator, Anonymous - Scrivener. (ca. 1810). Marriage Certificate (Trauschein) for Johannes Stozer (?) and Ehlisabeth Stimmes. (Manuscripts). Retrieved from <https://libwww.freelibrary.org/digital/item/6629>
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13. Anonymous - Decorator, Anonymous - Scrivener. (1824). Bookplate (Bücherzeichen) for Esther Sauder. (Manuscripts). Retrieved from <https://libwww.freelibrary.org/digital/item/7125>
14. (David Kulp (1777-1834)) - Decorator, (David Kulp (1777-1834)) - Scrivener. (12/27/1813). Bookplate (Bücherzeichen) for Esther Kolb. (Manuscripts). Retrieved from <https://libwww.freelibrary.org/digital/item/7092>
15. (Johann Adam Eyer (1755-1837)) - Decorator, (Johann Adam Eyer (1755-1837)) - Scrivener. (5/25/1780). Bookplate (Bücherzeichen) for Abraham Landes. (Manuscripts). Retrieved from <https://libwww.freelibrary.org/digital/item/6387>
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18. (Eckerlin, Israel) - Decorator. (1745). Ein sehr geistreicher Spiegel, als worinnen das rechte Bild des einsamen Lebens erscheint, und was eigentlich desselben Beschaffenheit seye, wann es seine rechtmässige Sache darstellt und ans Licht gibt. (Broadsides). Retrieved from <https://libwww.freelibrary.org/digital/item/38498>
19. Anonymous- Decorator, Anonymous - Scrivener (ca. 1800) Love Token Retrieved from https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/4896?what=Frakturs&ao=on&ft=* &offset=0&rpp=20&pos=13
20. Anonymous - Decorator, Anonymous - Scrivener. (ca. 1850). A True Lover's Knot. (Manuscripts). Retrieved from <https://libwww.freelibrary.org/digital/item/7849>

Exhibit Catalog Continued

21. Anonymous - Decorator, Anonymous - Scrivener. (ca. 1800). Valentine. (Manuscripts). Retrieved from <https://libwww.freelibrary.org/digital/item/6271>

22. (Henrich Otto (c. 1733-c. 1799)) - Decorator, Ephrata Cloister - Printer/Publisher. (1785). Spiritual Labyrinth (Geistlicher Irrgarten). (Letterpress Prints). Retrieved from <https://libwww.freelibrary.org/digital/item/6461>

23. (Christian Beschler (active c. 1796-c.1820)) - Decorator, (Christian Beschler (active c. 1796-c.1820)) - Scrivener. (1799). God, you are so rich today (Gott, du bist noch heut so reich). (Manuscripts). Retrieved from <https://libwww.freelibrary.org/digital/item/6391>

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25. Albert Levone (artist), American, active c. 1935, Samuel Troxel (object maker), Pennsylvania Museum, Memorial Hall (object owner), Pennsylvania German Dish, c. 1936, watercolor, graphite, and gouache on paperboard, Index of American Design, [1943.8.8102](#) Samuel Troxel (1823) Oval Scalloped Dish (Pottery) Retrieved from https://www.nga.gov/features/slideshows/pennsylvania-german-folk-art-from-the-index-of-american-design.html#slide_4

26. Charlotte Angus (artist), American, 1911 - 1989, Anonymous Craftsman (object maker), Mrs. Louis H. Duhring (object owner), Hooked Rug, c. 1940, watercolor and graphite on paper, Index of American Design, [1943.8.257](#) Retrieved from [Your paragraph text](#)

27. Betty Jean Davis (artist), American, active c. 1935, Anonymous Craftsman (object maker), Asher Odenwelder, Jr. (object owner), Pennsylvania German Chest, 1935/1942, watercolor and graphite on paper, Index of American Design, [1943.8.17161](#) Retrieved from https://www.nga.gov/features/slideshows/pennsylvania-german-folk-art-from-the-index-of-american-design.html#slide_15

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Thank you

Danke