

Documents From the Collections of the Historical Society of Dauphin County

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The Historical Society of Dauphin County

Courtesy of the Collection of the Historical Society of Dauphin County.



The John Harris/Simon Cameron Mansion, now part of the Historical Society of Dauphin County.

Founded in 1869, the Historical Society of Dauphin County (HSDC), located in Harrisburg, is one of the oldest county historical organizations in Pennsylvania. Its origins are steeped in the traditions of the great nineteenth century antiquarian historians like William Henry Egle, Luther Reily Kelker, and A. Boyd Hamilton, who were among its founders. Its establishment was a direct result of the ongoing

struggle to prevent important local historical materials from being sent to distant repositories (most notably the Historical Society of Pennsylvania).

HSDC's geographic location in the state capital as well as the membership of prominent Pennsylvania historians meant that the agency's focus was not just on Dauphin County, but rather upon the broader interests of state and national history. As a result, the Society's first one hundred years of acquisitions were a reflection of a broad collecting policy.

At the same time as HSDC was working to build its collections for the future, it was working under the assumption that it was a private club. As a result, the rich holdings of the Society were an untapped resource for scholars. A closed door policy also helped to hide the complete lack of organization for the archival collections.

The lack of order was confirmed by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission's (PHMC) survey of historical society records (*Historical Manuscript Depositories in Pennsylvania*, compiled by Irwin Richman, published by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Harrisburg, 1965) which reported less than one hundred feet of materials in the Society's collections. Today, we estimate nearly five hundred feet of materials are available to researchers.

Beginning in the 1980's, the Historical Society began serious efforts toward redefining its mission, reorganizing the collections, and making its resources available to both the scholarly community and general public. A new constitution adopted in 1990 provided for the Society to acquire materials relative to Harrisburg, Dauphin County, and the Greater Harrisburg Area, the latter primarily as a fundraising tool. Many non-county materials have subsequently been transferred to more appropriate agencies. The 1988 renovation of the former Cameron Stable Building (behind the Society's museum—the John Harris and Simon Cameron Mansion) meant that the Archives had a three thousand foot home which effectively tripled existing storage space. Grants from the Margaret McCormick Trust (administered by Dauphin Deposit Bank), the Whittaker Foundation, and the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission have allowed the Society to retain professional archival staff, purchase acid-free materials, and develop the first comprehensive guide to the collections. The Society is indebted for the services of its two archivists, Christopher Fritsch (1990-1993) and Mary Parry (1993-date), for their hard work and efforts.

A brief summary of *some* of the Society's papers are listed below. They are available for use Mondays through Thursdays from 1:00-4:00 p.m. A donation is

requested. Mail inquiries are welcome. Photocopying is available for fifteen cents per page and photo reproductions can be arranged for a minimal fee.

MG 12 Records of the Anti-Slavery Society of Harrisburg 1836-1911

Constitution and Proceedings of the Anti-Slavery Society dated 1836 and a paper entitled "A History of the Anti-Slavery Society" (1911).

MG 25 Records of the Harrisburg League for Municipal Improvements

A collection of pamphlets and original minutes relating to efforts to preserve Harrisburg's riverfront, establish a network of gardens, and install a municipal water treatment plant. Headed by Vance McCormick, Mira Lloyd Dock, and J. Horace McFarland, the Municipal League's program was the basis for the American "City Beautiful Movement."

MG 63 Papers of the Rawn Family

Personal diaries dating from 1830-1861 and 1863-65 which were written by Charles C. Rawn (1802-1865), a prominent lawyer and member of the Army's War Board until his death.

MG 70 Papers of Rev. John Elder

Rev. John Elder (1706-1792) was one of the most controversial figures in frontier Pennsylvania history. Colonel of the frontier militia during the French and Indian War, Pastor of Paxton and Derry Churches, and probably leader of the Paxton Massacre at Conestoga, Elder's correspondence and sermon notes are rare glimpses of this important figure's thoughts.

MG 91 Papers of Francis Rawn Shunk (Governor 1845-48)

Francis Rawn Shunk (1788-1848) studied law under Thomas Elder (son of Rev. John Elder: see Elder Papers MG 70 for additional information) and later served as Governor of the Commonwealth. Approximately fifteen items including correspondence to and from, commissions, etc.

MG 129 Records of the Pelgram and Meyer Mills, Harrisburg

Ten boxes containing thirteen volumes of cloth sample books (plain piece goods, office piece goods, Jacquard [sic], and miscellaneous). Pelgram and Meyer purchased the Harrisburg Cotton Mill Company (see MG 158) in the mid-1880's. They converted the cotton works to a silk mill which opened in January 1887.

MG 140 The Almanac Collection

One carton containing a large collection of almanacs spanning 1792 to 1921 from Pennsylvania, Maryland, New York, and elsewhere, in England and German.

MG 158 Records of the Harrisburg Cotton Mill Company

The Cotton Mill (established 1849) was considered Harrisburg's first major industry. These records consist of the 1851 charter, a list of stockholders, the Minute Book (1849-65) and miscellaneous papers. (See MG 129 Records of the Pelgram and Meyer Mills for the successor firm to the Cotton Mill Company).

MG 238 Papers of William Maclay

First United States Senator from Pennsylvania and surveyor of Harrisburg, William Maclay (1737-1804) was a well-known late-eighteenth-century figure. These papers consist of accounts, books of expenditures, bills, receipts, legal documents, personal correspondence (four items), and miscellaneous items.

MG 241 Records of the Harrisburg Defense Committee

The Harrisburg Seven Trial of 1972 was perhaps the only major event of 1960's

Courtesy of the Collection of the Historical Society of Dauphin County.



Six of Seven Defendants defended by the Harrisburg Defense Committee: left to right, Tony Scoblick, Father Wenderoth, Neal McLaughlin, Egbal Ahmad, Elizabeth McAllister, Ted Glick.

radicalism to occur in Harrisburg. It concerned charges made by then-FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover that eight (later seven) individuals (among them Father Philip Berrigan) had actively conspired to kidnap Presidential Advisor Henry Kissinger and blow up steam tunnels underneath the United States Capitol. This extensive collection contains press releases, newsletters, publications, original art, posters, photographs, and other materials utilized by the Harrisburg Defense Committee to support the seven defendants.

RECORDS OF AMERICAN REVOLUTIONARY WAR ERA UNITS, PENNSYLVANIA REGIMENTS:

MG 270 Records of 4th Battalion, Col. Robert Elder Commanding

MG 271 Records of 11th Battalion, Col. Timothy Green Commanding

MG 272 Records of the 6th Battalion, Col. John Rogers Commanding

MG 290 Papers of Simon Snyder (Governor 1808-1817)

One folder of correspondence, ca. 1812, from or to Simon Snyder (1759-1819).

MG 352 Records of the Civic Club of Harrisburg

1898 to the present. Four cartons. The Civic Club of Harrisburg was one of the leading bodies in the City Beautiful Movement at the turn of the century. Many of the city's leading socialites were presidents or members of the Civic Club. Included in this collection are both Board and General Membership minutes, publications, Committee Reports (Parks, Civic Improvements, etc.) and membership lists.

MG 377 Papers of Rev. John Conrad Bucher, his son Jacob, and his son John Conrad

Rev. John Conrad Bucher was described in Runk's Biographical Encyclopedia (*Biographical Encyclopedia of Dauphin County* by J. M. Runk, Pennsylvania: J. M. Runk, publisher, 1896, p. 191) as a "noted early divine as well as an officer during the French and Indian War." His son John Jacob (1764-1827) had an extensive career in local politics. Between 1796 and his death, he served Dauphin County as Coroner, Justice of the Peace, nine-term State Legislator, and Associate Judge of Courts for Dauphin County. His most notable contribution was his 1810 appointment as a commissioner for the erection of the new State Capitol Building at Harrisburg. John Conrad Bucher (1792-1851), son of John Jacob Bucher, served as a U.S. Congressman (1830) and as Associate Judge of Courts (following his father). This collection contains business papers of John Conrad, sermon notes of Rev. John Conrad and John Jacob, and papers relative to the movement of the state capital to Harrisburg.

MG 401 Papers of Silas Comfort Swallow (Presidential Candidate, Prohibition Party, 1904)

Swallow (1839-1930), a prominent minister of the Methodist Episcopal Church, was a leading force in the cause of Prohibition. This collection contains his political writings, scrapbooks, and the author's copies of his own publications.

MG 404 Records of the Hummelstown Brownstone Quarry

Papers and official records of this local business dating from 1867-1927. The Brownstone Quarries and the accompanying spur line known as the "Brownstone and Middletown Railroad" were vital local industries in the Hummelstown and Hershey region.

MG 405 Papers of the Kelker Family

Members of this prominent local family were among the Historical Society's first benefactors. Their donation of books, papers, photographs, furniture, and the family home provided the Society with its first major historical collections. As local antiquarians and collectors, the Kelker materials include not only family papers but various primary resource materials on local historical topics.

MG 442 Papers of Daniel Hastings (Governor 1895-1899)

One folder of correspondence to and from Daniel Hastings (1849-1904), dated between 1890 and 1898.

MG 466 Papers of the McCormick Family of Harrisburg

This six-carton collection contains personal, business, and financial papers of members of the McCormick family of Harrisburg. Among the items are diaries (Mary Wilson Alricks' visit to Philadelphia ca. 1820, Colonel Henry McCormick's visit to Colorado in the 1850's), political papers (Vance McCormick—Mayor of Harrisburg, gubernatorial candidate, confidant of Woodrow Wilson), photographs (a Matthew Brady half-plate daguerreotype ca. 1855), and other items. A unique sub-collection relates to Robert McCormick who was a leader in the Boys' Education Movement (Olivet School) in Reading, Pennsylvania.

MG 467 Papers of Edmund Mathers

Personal diaries of William Mathers (1870-83, 1887-1906, 1909, 1910, 1912-1918) owner of a millinery shop and later a dealer in steam appliances. Mathers was also a member of the Harrisburg City Council during the 1885 Dauphin County Centennial Celebration.

Courtesy of the Collection of the Historical Society of Dauphin County.



Simon Cameron in front of the Harris/Cameron Mansion.

MG 500 Papers of the Cameron Family

This collection constitutes the bulk of known correspondence from Simon Cameron (1799-1889), U.S. Senator and Secretary of War. While this collection has been microfilmed and an index prepared by the PHMC, there are other extensive materials associated with the collection. A new index of every name has been created to identify both recipients and senders of correspondence directed toward Cameron. In addition, there are extensive scrapbook collections made by Margaretta Brua Cameron, relating to her husband's political career. Recent acquisitions also include additional Simon Cameron letters, J. Donald Cameron letters, and Cameron estate correspondence.

MG 502 Records of the Capitol Region (Central Pennsylvania Chapter) of the American Red Cross

This massive collection contains extensive materials from World War I to the present relating to the Red Cross, its membership, and various disaster relief activities.

Large photographic archives accompany the collection as does an extensive group of scrap books.

MG 531 The Papers of George Wolf (Governor of Pennsylvania 1829-1835)

This collection contains a wide range of original and copied correspondence relating to George Wolf (1777-1840). Many of the items relate to his son-in-law Henry Buehler who was a relative of the McCormick family (see MG 466 for other materials).

MG 532 Papers of William Calder (1826-1893)

This unusual collection contains materials relative to Calder's work as a missionary in China ca. 1853. In addition, there are extensive materials on the establishment of the Pennsylvania Steel Co. at Harrisburg in the 1860's.

CIVIL WAR, DIARIES AND SIMILAR MATERIALS:

Because of the interest in Civil War history, the following is a brief listing of relevant materials found in the HSDC collection:

MG 59 Papers of Major Lane S. Hart

Society of the Army of the Potomac, Letters and Telegrams. 1874.

MG 72 Papers of Alexander Bergstresser

Civil War Diary, 1864-65. Bandsman, 3rd Brigade, 1st Division, 14th Corps.

MG 92 Records of the Cameron Guards

Secretary's Ledger, minutes and muster rolls. 1859-61.

MG 93 Records of the Middletown Guards

Muster Roll Book, 1867.

MG 125 Records of the City Greys of Harrisburg (The First City Zouaves)

Minutes, subscribers' list, personal papers.

MG 128 Papers of Thomas Miller

Docket from U.S. military courts in Harrisburg during 1863. Extensive details concerning plans for defending the city.

MG 222 Papers of the Young Family

R. J. Young diary, 1860-62.

MG 230 Records of Co. D, 194th Pa. Volunteers

Company descriptive book, orders, morning reports, clothing.

MG 265 Records of the 107th Pa. Volunteers

Muster lists, correspondence, etc.

MG 266 Records of the 7th Pa. Cavalry

Second Regt. roll book.

MG 313 Papers of Libor Winters

Regimental Account Book and two diaries. 81st Pa. Volunteers.

MG 360 Records of the United States Army. Civil War Paymaster Vouchers for the following Regiments:

Maine,	7th Regt. June 30, 1863
Michigan,	9th Bat. Vol. Art. June 30, 1863
New York,	54th Regt. June 30, 1863
	137th Regt. December 31, 1863
	149th Regt. December 1863
	154th Regt. June 30, 1863
Ohio,	29th Regt. November 13, 1864
	66th Regt. March 1864, August 31, 1864
Pennsylvania,	28th Regt. August 31, 1864
	2nd Regt. Cavalry, October 31, 1861
	Co. E, Light Artillery, August 31, 1864
Military Recruiters	
Carlisle Barracks Convalescents and Laundresses	

NON-PROCESSED MATERIALS:

As work is proceeding to sort the Society's archives, important new records have been received by the agency. These materials are currently being processed and should be generally available by the date of this publication.

Papers of Benjamin Lowengard and the Courier Press

This collection contains extensive materials relating to the Courier Press's activities between 1915 and 1945. Some of the items include printed samples, original art (mostly for fashion plates), theater programs, etc. In addition, there is the original minute book of the Salem Lodge of the B'nai B'rith of Harrisburg dating from ca. 1855. This German language book constitutes the earliest known Harrisburg Jewish record.

Photographs by McFarland Press and J. Horace McFarland

A leader in the City Beautiful Movement as well as various naturalist circles,

McFarland also founded and operated the McFarland Press in Harrisburg. This collection, currently being copied and preserved through funding from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission's local history grants program, consists of several thousand negatives, prints, and magic lantern slides relating to Harrisburg, the state government, and the City Beautiful Movement between 1910 and 1945.

Courtesy of the Collection of the Historical Society of Dauphin County.



Italian Park Garden in Harrisburg, part of the Harrisburg "City Beautiful Movement." From the McFarland Collection.

Note: All photographs accompanying this article, courtesy of the Historical Society of Dauphin County.