

Documenting Social Action: Environmental Archives at the University of Pittsburgh

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The Environmental Archives (EA) in the Archives of Industrial Society at the University of Pittsburgh is the premiere collection of its type in Pennsylvania. The EA collections span the globe with an emphasis on the United States and within that on Pennsylvania. It is particularly strong in, but by no means restricted to, material related to the urban environment. This essay describes the EA collections containing resources related to the environmental history of Pennsylvania. By making these resources better known we hope to encourage their use.

Environmental issues are so prominent in the world today that it is impossible to separate such issues from political, economic, and social concerns. Individuals and groups have devoted time and energy to protecting the environment and to making people aware of potential dangers from private and public works, such as land reclamation, residential and commercial development, and road construction. Through grass-roots methods and judicial proceedings, these individuals and groups have left behind a legacy to their efforts in lessening the threat of environmental hazards.

As archivists, our goal is to document the history of environmental action by preserving material related to grass-roots, institutional, and political activities. We aim to collect, preserve, and make available material pertinent to all who are interested in the environment. By collecting this material, the archive will document the efforts taken to preserve the environment, providing researchers with information about unsuccessful and successful measures. Since environmental issues include a variety of topics, common to several geographic regions, we collect a wide variety of material in order to provide a complete resource for environmental researchers.

At the Archives of Industrial Society (AIS), University of Pittsburgh, we have collected a broad range of material concerning international, national, and regional environmental topics, with a concentration on Pennsylvania. Our international and national holdings, forming a solid foundation for the environmental archive, revolve around the following collections: the Environmental Affairs of England Collection and the Henry T. Bernstein Papers, specializing in issues particular to Great Britain's environmental problems; the Environmental Action Foundation Collection, documenting the foundation's groundbreaking efforts to organize the first national Earth Day and its leading efforts to preserve the environment by increasing public and political awareness; and the Samuel and Barbara Hays Collection, focusing on regional, state,

national, and international action and on a multitude of environmental concerns. Although these four collections highlight our national and international holdings, AIS also has a rich archive specific to Pennsylvania. The collections address topics such as forestry, water pollution, solid waste storage, smoke and smog abatement, acid rain, nuclear waste, strip mining, toxic waste and much more.

AIS has collections specific to Pennsylvania from several environmentalists and organizations, including historians, politicians, and private and state-sponsored institutions. Two influential activists who have a great interest in environmental affairs are environmental historian Dr. Samuel and biologist Barbara Hays. They have the honor of starting the first urban environmental archive in the country at the University of Pittsburgh.

The Hays' started their archive because no repository existed from which they could research the environment. They subscribed to a great number of journals, became members of various organizations, and attended several conferences, citizens' meetings, and political hearings in order to accumulate their material. Their interests took them all over the state and beyond. Focusing on Pennsylvania issues, the Samuel and Barbara Hays Environmental Collection, 1960-1996, houses material specific to county land use plans, surface mining, and air quality. Other topics include wild and scenic rivers, water resources, water quality (river pollution, aquatic ecology, Sanitary Water Board, mine pollution), and more.

Adding to the strength of the Samuel and Barbara Hays Collection are many journals and newsletters from grass-roots and state-supported organizations. Some of the titles include *Action Line*, *Audubon Leader*, *Bio-Science*, *Conservation News*, *Environmental News*, *Mother Earth News*, and many others. The collection is so extensive that it incorporates several others, three of which are specific to Pennsylvania. The Wyona Coleman Collection concentrates on surface and underground mining. Wyona Coleman has been a leader on coal and energy issues for the national Sierra Club and active in a number of Pennsylvania coal citizen organizations. The papers address topics such as coal mine drainage, river pollution, mining regulations, and more.

Second is the Gail Rockwood Collection, which is specific to the Pennsylvania environment. Rockwood, who has served for many years as member and chair of the Citizens Advisory Council of the Department of Environmental Protection (formerly the Department of Environmental Resources), has devoted much time and energy to environmental concerns in the state. The material in the collection covers a range of topics including clean water, air pollution, and soil conservation.

The third is the Sierra Club, Pennsylvania Chapter and Allegheny Group Collections, for which AIS is the official repository. The holdings, 1970-1997, include correspondence from the Harrisburg office including Chapter Execu-

tive Committee Minutes, Chapter business papers, Allegheny Group papers, and newsletters. Files also include conservation issues such as wilderness and open space, state parks issues, Tocks Island Dam, 'Save the Delaware Committee,' Toxic Chemical Release Inventory, and the Surface Mine Control Reclamation Act of 1977.

Although the Samuel and Barbara Hays Collection is extensive, it is not the only one pertinent to Pennsylvania. The state-wide attention for environmental concerns continues in the William Guckert Collection. William Guckert was a sportsman and conservationist who advocated strict legislation to regulate strip mining and clean streams in Pennsylvania. He was appointed to the Pennsylvania State Reclamation Board in 1963 and as Director of the State Bureau of Surface Mine Reclamation in 1967. The Guckert Papers, 1930-1970, complementing the Wyona Coleman Collection, include the Allegheny County Sportsman's League meeting minutes, financial reports, constitution by-laws, and membership cards. The correspondence with sportsman members and politicians addresses fishing regulations, forest wildlife management, and wild game management. Reports on reservoir projects, regional parks, coal mine drainage, river pollution, the Fulton Building Sewage Project, and the Kinzua Dam Project also exist in the holdings.

Several of the environmental collections in AIS focus on western Pennsylvania but are important for other environmental studies as well. This is especially true since the efforts taken by regional environmentalists and institutions reverberated throughout the state and the nation, emphasizing the fact that environmental problems are not restricted to one area. One such influential environmentalist is Michelle Madoff. Interested in improving the air quality in Pittsburgh, Madoff founded Group Against Smog and Pollution (GASP), a watchdog and lobby organization for air quality. Madoff eventually was elected to the Pittsburgh City Council where she pursued her interest in the environment. The Michelle Madoff Collection, 1970-1977, spans the years when she was most active in GASP and as a City Councilperson. The collection houses papers about air pollution control, blast furnace slags, coke oven emission standards, and slag quenching. Other papers are specific to the Pennsylvania Conference on Steel, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Resources, Pennsylvania Environmental Council, and GASP.

Group Against Smog and Pollution was founded in October 1969, in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, during state and county hearings for rigid air pollution regulations. Becoming a model organization for other cities, and boasting a membership of "blue and white collar workers, doctors, scientists, housewives, lawyers, students, and environmental specialists," the group monitors industrial violations while petitioning industry to adopt pollution abatement controls. The GASP Collection, 1972-1975, includes copies of petitions filed before the Allegheny County Air Pollution Variance Board and correspondence, decisions, notices, and reports about air quality.

GASP had many supporters, including Patricia Pelkofer who was the GASP representative to the Pennsylvania Department of Energy Resources Air and Water Quality Technical Advisory Committee. Pelkofer was also involved with a variety of citizens' groups concerned about the deteriorating environment and with stimulating public awareness and support for environmental regulations and controls. A sampling of the organizations represented in the Patricia Pelkofer Collection are: GASP; Pennsylvanians United to Rescue the Environment, Pennsylvania Groundwater Policy Education Project, Group Recycling in Pennsylvania, Citizens Against Toxic Sites, and Pennsylvania Alliance for Environmental Education.

Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, is rich with other organizations, past and present, dedicated to monitoring and abating pollution. One such organization was the Mellon Institute of Research, founded in 1910, which specialized in the study of smoke and air pollution and in the research of methods to control pollution. The Mellon Institute of Research Smoke Investigation Activities Collections, 1911-1975, houses material about the impact of smoke and air pollution in an urban setting. Also included are studies and records of the Smoke and Dust Abatement League which lobbied for strict air pollution regulatory controls.

Allegheny County sponsored its own institutions to monitor pollution and to study methods to alleviate the problems. The Allegheny County Air Pollution Advisory Committee assists in monitoring the levels of air pollution in Allegheny County. This organization's collection, 1959-1986, contains Allegheny County Air Pollution Control Advisory Committee meeting minutes and membership lists, while also including reports on sulfur dioxide, ambient air quality, and emission standards for blast furnaces. The collection houses the Allegheny Health Department Bureau of Air Pollution Control Implementation Plan measures, the Air Pollution Research Unit papers, Health Effects Committee papers, and notes from the Pennsylvania legislature.

In 1949, the Bureau of Air Pollution Control was created under the jurisdiction of the County Health Department. In addition, a permanent advisory committee was established and renamed the Smoke Control Advisory Committee. This advisory committee, composed of distinguished scientists, economists, and industry leaders, has played an important role in smoke control in Pittsburgh since it was first created. The collection, 1941-1978, contains minutes, organizational charts, annual reports, city and county ordinances, and miscellaneous reports from the Environmental Protection Agency.

Two other collections related to the Allegheny County Health Department are also present in the archives. The Allegheny County Health Department EPA/SIP Air Quality Collection contains EPA correspondence, Pennsylvania grant information, and state implementation information regarding air quality in Pittsburgh and Allegheny County. The other holding is the Al-

leghey County Health Department Lead Survey Collection which includes requests for blood lead samples analysis, civic records for all blood drawn, Environmental Health records and lead poisoning cases, and miscellaneous correspondence.

AIS also has multimedia collections documenting environmental hazards and improvement measures. The archive houses eighty videocassettes from WQED-TV of the Three Mile Island Episode in 1979. The Smoke Control Lantern Slide Collection documents the abatement of smoke pollution in Pittsburgh in the 1940s. The images illustrate the severity and improvement of smoke pollution before and after the clean-up. The Consol Mine Map Collection contains numerous tracings and hard backs from Consolidated Coal Company from the turn of the century. The maps are useful in determining land subsidence and possible underground water contamination.

The AIS acquired the records of the Environmental Action Foundation (EAF) in late 1996. This collection of approximately 120 linear feet of material has a national scope but contains some Pennsylvania material as well. Materials cover the cooperation of the EAF with various Pennsylvania organizations. The topics of cooperation, such as air quality, water pollution, and nuclear contamination in the state, compliment the strengths of other collections.

Although some collections are in process, particularly the Environmental Action Foundation's, most have summary inventories to assist researchers. The EA offers a plethora of information to researchers who are interested in urban environment, Pennsylvania issues, and national and international concerns. The issues cover a multitude of topics such as air and water quality, mining, forestry, nuclear waste, and more. All collections are open to researchers, although some material may be restricted and appointments are necessary to prepare the material.

Since there is much to be done in the field of environmental history, we are committed to developing the EA, through funding, by collecting, processing, and displaying our environmental material. Our aim is to collect print material, oral history interviews, and visual media on a variety of topics. We hope to facilitate our development by making people aware of our goals, a process assisted by an article in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* on July 28, 1997. The EA plans to continue active collection building to provide support for research and to preserve for future generations the record of environmental concerns and actions without geographic restriction. Pennsylvania environmental history will be a key component of this ongoing effort.

Researchers interested in accessing materials in the EA should contact the Archives of Industrial Society at (412) 244-7065 or by e-mail at: ascoref+@pitt.edu. Individuals who are aware of collections to be considered for acquisition should contact Dennis East at (412) 244-7065 or by de2+@pitt.edu.

Notes:

1. Dominic LaCava is the former Associate Curator for Archives of Industrial Society, University Library System, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh. Ruth C. Carter is the former Head, Archives Service Center and Curator of Historical Collections, University Library System, University of Pittsburgh.

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2. The Archives of the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy were added to the Environmental Archives at the University of Pittsburgh after this article was written.