

## NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

### *Newly Available and Processed Collections at The Historical Society of Pennsylvania*

**W**HAT FOLLOWS IS A LIST of some of the collections at The Historical Society of Pennsylvania that have been fully processed within the past year and are now more available and accessible to researchers. Full finding aids for these collections, and many others, can be found online at <http://www.hsp.org/default.aspx?id=35>.

#### **Edwin Forrest Home Records, 1792–1990 (bulk 1872–1988)**

59 boxes, 10 vols.  
HSP Collection 3068

The Edwin Forrest Home for Retired Actors was founded in 1873 under the provisions of the will of Edwin Forrest, the acclaimed nineteenth-century actor and Philadelphia native. The Forrest Home provided aging stage and film performers (male and female) with free shelter, medical care, and a collegial atmosphere. Originally established in the Holmesburg section of Northeast Philadelphia, the home moved to Fairmount Park in 1928, where it remained until 1986 when it merged with the Lillian Booth Actors' Home in Englewood, New Jersey. Throughout his career, Forrest was an ardent advocate for and benefactor of American theater. When he died in 1872 without any heirs he left his most enduring gift to his profession with the Edwin Forrest Home. The collection documents the institution's history from 1872 to 1988, and is strongest for the years after 1915. Materials include records pertaining to the home's design, governance, finances, and residents. The collection is useful for documenting the evolution of the Forrest Home specifically and changing societal attitudes about old age and the elderly. Of special note is the Guest Records series, which holds guest registers similar in

format to scrapbooks, consisting of memorabilia and correspondence documenting individual residents.

**Leon J. Kolankiewicz (1892–1971) Papers, 1888–1978  
(bulk 1932–1966)**

6 boxes

HSP Collection 3071

Leon J. Kolankiewicz was a Pennsylvania state assemblyman, the first Polish American elected councilman-at-large in Philadelphia, and an ardent activist for Polish wartime and peacetime relief. A native Philadelphian, Kolankiewicz was alerted to the suffering of the Polish people while serving as an infantryman in France during World War I. Upon returning to the United States, Kolankiewicz worked with several different Polish American associations to aid Poland in its recovery from both world wars. As city councilman, Kolankiewicz advocated for the Polish immigrants and Polish Americans of Philadelphia, working to ensure their representation in the city's social and civic life, and was a tireless supporter of Polish art and culture. Kolankiewicz's papers are primarily related to his public personas as a city representative and Polish relief activist. Materials include correspondence with prominent Polish figures; assorted books and pamphlets about Polish war relief, Polish tourism, and Poland–U.S. relations; city government–related speeches, correspondence, and news clippings; and some publicity photographs. A majority of items are written or printed in Polish, including most correspondence. The collection is useful to researchers studying Philadelphia's Polish American community, America's war relief efforts in Poland, and to those interested in one of Philadelphia's first Polish American legislators.

**Ruth Johns Ferguson (1902–1989) Papers, 1901–1985  
(bulk 1950–1962)**

4 boxes, 4 flat files

HSP Collection 3075

Ruth Johns Ferguson was an African American beauty culture expert and businesswoman in Philadelphia. Coproprietor of the Apex School of

Beauty Culture at 535 South Broad Street for thirty-five years, she and business partner Naomi T. Fassett (1908–1983) trained generations of African American beauticians, primarily young women from North and West Philadelphia. Ferguson was a member of the National Beauty Culturists League (NBCL) and for many years served as president of its national sorority, Theta Nu Sigma. Born in Salisbury, Maryland, Ferguson's family moved to Philadelphia's Germantown when her father, the Reverend Joseph E. A. Johns, was appointed pastor of the Janes Memorial United Methodist Church. Early on Ferguson worked as an employee of the Apex Hair and News Company, and she established the Philadelphia branch of the national Apex School of Beauty Culture in the 1940s. The bulk of this small collection relates to her role as co-owner of the Apex School and her NBCL membership and consists primarily of photographs documenting Apex School graduations and NBCL events. There are no records of the operations of the Apex School itself. Personal items are few, but of note are her father's personal diary and some family photographs.

**James J. Cleary (1888–1974) Papers, 1837–1988 (bulk 1907–1956)**

15 boxes, 11 vols., 2 flat files

HSP Collection 3076

James Joyce Cleary was a poet, businessman, athlete, socialist, and father. A prolific writer and a compiler of scrapbooks, Cleary's papers reflect his life-long passions: poetry, Ireland, sports, socialist causes, and social justice issues. Born in 1888 in County Tipperary, Ireland, he immigrated to the United States in 1907 and settled permanently in Philadelphia in 1911. Cleary worked a series of jobs, including insurance salesman, journalist, deliveryman, and dockworker, before opening his own grocery store, Golden Dawn, on West Somerset Street circa 1932. He wrote poems, stories, and essays throughout his life and was often published in Philadelphia newspapers such as the *Evening Bulletin* and the *Public Ledger*. Active in Philadelphia's Socialist Party, Cleary spoke at local meetings and wrote for socialist papers like the *Peoples Press*. The bulk of the Cleary papers date from the late 1900s to the 1960s and consist of Cleary's published and unpublished writing, socialist literature, newspaper and magazine clippings, programs of local sporting events, Irish newspapers,

financial and legal records, and, most notably, scrapbooks. Central to this collection, Cleary's scrapbooks serve as rich chronicles of a wide range of American popular culture and current events from the 1910s through the 1930s.

**Nelson A. Diaz Papers, 1967–2004 (bulk 1981–2002)**

177 boxes, 7 flat files

HSP Collection 3079

Nelson Diaz (1947–) is a Philadelphia attorney who served on the Philadelphia County Court of Common Pleas (1981–1992), as general counsel for the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (1993–1996), and as Philadelphia City Solicitor (2001–2004). The first Puerto Rican admitted to the Pennsylvania Bar (1973) and the first Hispanic Common Pleas Court judge in Philadelphia, Diaz has been highly active in the Hispanic and overall Philadelphia community as an activist, businessman, and journalist and has served on numerous boards and committees in the Philadelphia area. His community involvements include a long relationship with his alma mater, Temple University, the Spanish Merchants' Association, the William Penn Foundation, and Democratic National Hispanic Caucus. The bulk of the Diaz papers span the years 1981–2002 and deal almost entirely with his public and professional personas. Additionally, over the years Diaz received and kept material from virtually every major Hispanic organization in Philadelphia. The collection is valuable primarily for its rich documentation of the wide range of community organizations and governmental bodies in which Diaz was involved. Materials include correspondence, administrative and financial records, bylaws, petitions, press clippings, photographs, and audio and visual cassettes.

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