

## NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

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

**W**HAT FOLLOWS ARE DESCRIPTIONS of some of the collections at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania that have either been acquired within the past year or more fully processed and therefore are more available and accessible to researchers. Full finding aids or catalog records for these processed collections, and many others, can be found online at <http://hsp.org/collections/catalogs-research-tools/finding-aids> and <http://discover.hsp.org/>.

#### **Conrad Weiser Papers, 1741–1783**

2 boxes, 2 volumes

Collection 700

Conrad Weiser (1696–1760) was a German immigrant who settled in Pennsylvania and became an Indian affairs agent and lieutenant colonel for the British forces in the French and Indian War. When Weiser was sixteen years old, his father made an arrangement with a local Mohawk chief for the youth to live with the tribe in the upper Schoharie Valley, during which time he learned much about the language and customs of the Mohawks and the Six Nations. This knowledge would be invaluable to him during his career as an envoy to the tribes on behalf of the colonial government of Pennsylvania. Weiser acted as an interpreter, not only between the British colonial government and the Six Nations, but also as a negotiator between various southern tribes and the Iroquois. For all of these negotiations he traveled widely and frequently, often making the long and difficult journey to the Iroquois capital of Onondaga. Throughout his career, Weiser negotiated land deals that created the current boundaries of Pennsylvania. He also had a lasting impact on the United

States' policies toward Native Americans and shaped the future of the country by strengthening and preserving alliances. Weiser's papers consist of correspondence, financial records, muster rolls, legal documents, and a bound ledger. His letters mention many men who shaped colonial America, including Robert Hunter Morris (1700–64), deputy governor of Pennsylvania from 1754–56; William Johnson (ca. 1715–44), an important British commander and interpreter during the French and Indian War; Thomas Penn (1702–75), proprietor of Pennsylvania after the death of his father, William Penn; William Allen (1704–80), founder of Allentown, Pennsylvania, chief justice of Pennsylvania, and mayor of Philadelphia; Robert Dinwiddie (1693–1770), lieutenant governor of Virginia; William Gooch (1681–1751), also a lieutenant governor of Virginia; George Washington (1732–99); and fellow interpreter Andrew Montour (ca. 1720–72).

**James Gibson Papers, 1712–1849 (bulk 1770–1800)**

7 boxes, 1 volume, 1 flat file

Collection 236

The James Gibson papers relate to Pennsylvania's colonial and early national periods, with particular emphasis on the work of the Pennsylvania Population Company, which sought to settle lands in the western part of the state. James Gibson (1769–1856) was a lawyer from Philadelphia who was related to the prominent Shippen family. In addition to his work as a lawyer, Gibson worked with several companies that dealt with the speculation in and distribution of northern and western Pennsylvania lands, and he may have served as an agent for those interested in these lands. Among the companies for which he worked were the Asylum Company, which worked with lands in Luzerne, Northampton, and Northumberland Counties; the Holland Land Company, which had bought land in western New York State; and the Pennsylvania Population Company, which oversaw lands in far western Pennsylvania counties such as Erie, Crawford, and Allegheny. Though it is not clear exactly what role Gibson played for the Population Company, he presumably handled its legal affairs. The collection spans from the early 1700s to the mid-1800s and contains an assortment of papers such as family materials, correspondence, administrative papers, accounts, mortgages, powers of attorney, minutes, maps, and surveys.

**Historical Society of Pennsylvania Trade Cards Collection, ca.  
1800–2000 (bulk 1800–1900)**  
29 boxes, 2 volumes  
Collection 3138

Trade cards were the primary form for the advertisement of products and services in nineteenth-century America, particularly during the two decades prior to 1900. Trade cards feature colorful illustrations, sayings, humor (sometimes bordering on the insensitive by today's standards), poems, and religious aphorisms. Between 1870 and 1900 the use of trade cards by business establishments was widespread, and products advertised ranged from tobacco and medicines to clothes and restaurants. This collection is comprised of trade cards from Philadelphia and the surrounding region, most of which are arranged alphabetically by name. Except for a small group of business cards of restaurants and art galleries in Philadelphia's Center City that was acquired by the Historical Society between the 1990s and 2011, the majority of the cards are from the nineteenth century. Most of the cards are small and feature color images depicting people, scenes, animals, clowns, and landscapes. Some of the images feature stereotyped caricatures of African Americans, Chinese, and other ethnic groups. This collection has been put together by the Historical Society of Pennsylvania over time and is still open for additional accruals.

**Alfred H. Whitaker Spanish-American War Diary, 1898–1899, 1998,  
2010, undated**  
1 volume  
Collection 3705

Alfred H. Whitaker was from York, Pennsylvania. He served during the Spanish-American War (1898–99) and died in Manila, Philippines, on April 13, 1898. He is buried in Laurel Hill Cemetery with other members of the Whitaker family. Whitaker's diary entries date from May 31, 1898, to March 10, 1899. Most are very detailed and contain information on his whereabouts and duties. The entries, which range from a few lines to a few pages, occasionally reference military actions. The diary also contains a few pasted photographs and clippings pertaining to the war, as well as, at the back of the book, a letter from Lillian Bradley to the Kodak

Company and an instruction sheet on developing photographs. The diary also contains a few loose items: an undated photograph of Göteborg, Hammen, Nattstämning in Sweden; a card written from Alfred to his sister Mary H. Whitaker; a diagram showing the cemetery lots of the Whitaker family; and a photocopied 2010 article from the *Wine Enthusiast* titled “Fine Wine on a Civil War Battlefield.”

**Batcheler, Hartshorne, and Sahlin Families Papers, 1789–2007  
(bulk 1880–2007)**

124 boxes, 67 volumes, 13 flat files  
Collection 3173

This collection contains the papers of the Batcheler, Hartshorne, and Sahlin families, descended from Axel (1826–1909) and Axeline Sahlin (1834–1922), a Swedish couple whose children lived in Europe and the United States. The records of four generations of the family, with documentation centering around five families, are preserved in this collection. The contents are mostly correspondence and other personal papers, including diaries, artwork, school work, and genealogical research on all branches of the family. There are also several photographs depicting all four generations of the family and their relatives. The papers of Axel Sahlin are particularly interesting because they document the development of the early iron and steel industry in the United States and abroad, especially in India. His letters and his “Personal Impressions of India”—along with the correspondence and photographs of Robert Chandler Sahlin—offer a particularly detailed record of the construction and early days of the Tata Iron and Steel Company and its mill in Sakchi, Jamshedpur, India.

**Woodlands Cemetery Company Papers, 1798–1990**

50 boxes, 152 volumes, 1 flat file drawer  
Collection 3661

The Woodlands Cemetery, still functioning as of 2013, was founded in 1840 on the grounds of the Woodlands estate, which belonged to famed Philadelphia lawyer Andrew Hamilton (ca. 1676–1741) and heavily

renovated by his grandson, William Hamilton (1745–1813). Soon after its founding, the cemetery became a popular burial spot for prominent Philadelphia men and women. The historic mansion and carefully tended grounds also made it a frequently used public recreation spot. This collection documents the growth and activities of the cemetery from its founding in 1840 into the 1990s. It contains administrative materials, financial records, correspondence, burial records, deeds to land in West Philadelphia, deeds to burial lots, blueprints and maps of the cemetery grounds, and a small number of photographs. The heart of this collection is burial records and correspondence about burial lot maintenance, although it also contains much Woodlands Cemetery Company financial information and documentation of renovations and changes to the cemetery grounds and mansion.

**Herbert Welsh Collection, 1759–1935, undated (bulk 1898–1925)**

120 boxes, 14 flat files, 145 volumes

Collection 702

This collection contains the papers of Herbert Welsh, noted political reformer and activist. Welsh, born in Philadelphia in 1851, immersed himself in various reform and humanitarian causes. With fellow Philadelphians he founded the Indian Rights Association (IRA) in 1882, which soon established itself as the most important organization working on behalf of the American Indian. As part of Welsh's activism in matters affecting Native Americans, he developed a close relationship with Theodore Roosevelt. Welsh was also critical of the interventionist role played by the United States after the Spanish-American War and took a vocal stance against US intervention in the Philippine Islands, even writing a book about torture by American soldiers during the Philippine occupation. His anti-imperialist activism connected with his involvement in international arbitration and his participation in the League of Nations. The collection spans from 1759 to 1935, with the bulk of the materials dating from the years 1898–1925. The collection contains correspondence, financial and legal documents, essays, speeches, files related to Herbert Welsh's activism, journals and diaries, scrapbooks, broadsides, serials, brochures and pamphlets, as well as other printed materials, photographs, prints, some drawings by Welsh, and letters, papers, and printed

material from or about his father, John Welsh, a Philadelphia merchant, US diplomat, and chairman of the International Centennial Exhibition of 1876.

### **Philadelphia Girls' Rowing Club Records, 1938–2011**

35 cartons, 3 portfolios

Collection 3670

The Philadelphia Girls' Rowing Club (PGRC), founded in 1938 by seventeen women, is a self-governing, private club that is open to women and girls fifteen years of age or older. Its purpose is "to promote, stimulate, and support among women an interest in amateur rowing and other forms of athletics which are supplementary to this support." The club owns a boat-house on the Schuylkill River and is a member of the Schuylkill Navy, the association of all the rowing clubs of Boathouse Row. The PGRC hosts the Bill Braxton Memorial Regatta each November, is home to the Agnes Irwin Day School for Girls rowing program, and conducts a number of activities throughout the year. This collection documents the club's activities from its founding until close to the present. It includes constitutions and bylaws, meeting minutes and notes, correspondence, financial records, membership and dues records, boat logs, scrapbooks, photographs, property records, engineers' reports, architectural drawings, grant applications, newsletters, event programs, books, clippings, CDs/DVDs, artifacts, and other items. There is some documentation of other rowing organizations, especially the National Women's Rowing Association.

### **The Plastic Club Records, 1888–2007**

52 boxes, 47 volumes, 11 flat files

Collection 3106

Seeing a need for an organization to promote women's art, Emily Sartain, an artist and the principal of the Philadelphia School of Design for Women, hosted the first organizational meeting of the Plastic Club, one of the oldest art organizations for women in the United States, in 1897. The founding members, who included talented artists such as Blanche Dillaye, May Fratz, Grace Martin, and Ann Pennock, agreed that the

club's mission would be "to promote a wider knowledge of art and to advance its interest by means of exhibitions and social intercourse among artists." The term "plastic" signifies the state of any unfinished piece of art. The club held exhibitions, offered art classes, and hosted social events such as its annual masquerade party, "the Rabbit." Many prominent and nationally recognized artists were members of the club, including Elenore Plaisted Abbott, Paula Himmelsbach Balano, Cecilia Beaux, Fern Isabel Coppedge, Elizabeth Shippen Green, Charlotte Harding, Frances Tipton Hunter, Violet Oakley, Emily and Harriet Sartain, Jessie Willcox Smith, Alice Barber Stephens, and Elizabeth Fisher Washington. The Plastic Club records span from 1888 to 2007 and include administrative records, correspondence, member records, annual reports, and exhibition catalogs. In addition, the collection contains scrapbooks, newspaper clippings, photographs, original artwork, and catalogs from Philadelphia and New York art galleries. The records of the Plastic Club were formally donated to the Historical Society of Pennsylvania in 2012 after having been deposited in 2007.

**Shirley J. Vernon Family History Papers, ca. 1984–ca. 2006**

10 cartons, 5 framed items, several unframed oversized items

Collection 3669

Shirley J. Vernon (1930–2011) was an architect and educator in Philadelphia. She began her professional career as an architect in 1953 and established a solo practice in 1968. She taught at Drexel University from 1957 to 1987 and at Moore College of Art and Design from 1986 until her retirement in 1996. In retirement she devoted herself to researching her family history in England and France. The collection includes about ten linear feet of manuscript materials and fifteen cartons of books. The manuscript portion, which is mostly organized into three-ring binders, documents Ms. Vernon's family history research and related travel. It contains notes, genealogical charts, photocopies from books, correspondence, typescripts, photographs, maps, ephemera, a print, and a brass rubbing. Additional items include two accordion folders and one manila folder containing more of Vernon's research files, as well as a memoir titled "The Vernon Story."

**New Immigrants Initiative Collection, 1976–2004**

22 boxes

Collection 3442

The Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies operated from 1972 until 2002 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. In January 2002, it merged with the Historical Society of Pennsylvania and its collections were integrated into the Historical Society's. The New Immigrants Initiative was a multiyear series of projects initiated by the Balch Institute and continued by the Historical Society that explored the history and experience of non-European immigrant communities in the Philadelphia area. The purpose of these projects was to document these communities for the historical record and to create interpretive exhibits, publications, and programs that educate various audiences about the recent immigrant experience. Five communities were initially part of the project, with four being fully finished: Indian, Arab, African, and Latino. A Korean project was started but not completed. The projects that are documented here include oral history audiocassettes and transcripts, photographs, video tapes, digital materials and computer disks, printed material, and ephemera.

**John Fryer Papers, 1876–2004 (bulk 1950–2000)**

217 boxes, 34 volumes, 9 flat files

Collection 3465

John Fryer was a groundbreaking gay psychiatrist best known for his appearance, in disguise as “Dr. Henry Anonymous,” at the 1972 American Psychiatric Association (APA) convention. His speech is credited with convincing the organization to remove homosexuality from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders in 1973. As a psychiatrist, Fryer worked largely with gay men, lesbians, people who abused drugs and alcohol, and those who were coping with death. He was also a professor at Temple University School of Medicine and organist and choirmaster at St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Germantown. This collection contains the personal and professional papers of John E. Fryer, spanning from his early teens to 2003, the year he died. The collection is divided into five series and includes correspondence; postcards; handwritten notes; concert programs; periodicals; subject files; patient records;



papers from his student years at Transylvania College, Vanderbilt University, and Ohio State University Hospital; appointment books; personal and travel diaries; diplomas and certificates; materials related to courses taught at Temple University; student records; reference materials; notebooks and manuscripts related to Fryer's research on the connections between religion and faith, on death, community mental health, cancer care, and persons living with AIDS/HIV; and a collection of old bulletins from St. Peter's. There are multiple church programs, music scores, sheet music, and promotional materials for church concerts and performances, as well as papers reflecting communication between Fryer and several companies dedicated to organ building and maintenance. The collection also includes audiocassettes, computer files, and many photographs and slides. Patient records, personal medical files, and student files are closed to researchers until 2078.

*Historical Society of Pennsylvania*

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