RESEARCH GUIDE FOR VISITORS
TO THE ARCHIVES OF THE
HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF THE PHOENIXVILLE AREA

INTRODUCTION
Welcome to the Museum and Archives of the Historical Society of the Phoenixville Area!
The purpose of the Historical Society of the Phoenixville Area is to acquire, by donation or purchase, any
objects, artifacts and information which will contribute to the preservation and interpretation of the history and
heritage of the Phoenixville area.

The Society’s resources are available to the public for conducting research on a variety of topics related to the
history of the area as well as those interested in family history. The Society’s archives contains materials
relating to the growth of the Phoenixville area and the people of the region from the pre-colonial era to the
present. The geographic area covered includes the Borough of Phoenixville, the surrounding townships
(Schuylkill, Charlestown and East Pikeland), the area adjacent to the Schuylkill River in Upper Providence
Township (Mont Clare), the Borough of Spring City and Valley Forge National Park.

SUBJECT MATTER INCLUDED IN THE COLLECTION
Advertising Medium (materials advertising a company or product)
Animal Husbandry and Farming
Art (original paintings, busts, samplers, sketches, etc.)
Businesses (articles and artifacts including merchandising items)
Chester County
Churches (Phoenixville area and neighboring churches)
Clothing (items of clothing)
Commercial Products (items manufactured in Phoenixville)
Documentary artifacts (Legal papers eg. deeds for property in the Phoenixville area)
Furniture
Genealogy (Family trees, obituaries, family bibles, newspaper articles, diaries, etc.)
Government and Politics (ordinances, articles relating to activities of council, mayor, police)
Historical Sites (articles about historic places in the area)
Household accessories
Military History
Music (music by Phoenixville composers)
Organizations (clubs, social and fraternal, lodges, library, Phx. Hospital Auxiliary)
Personal Artifacts
Phoenixville Area General History
Phoenix Iron Company - Phoenix Iron & Steel Company (history and products of the company)
Pictures (photographs, postcards of Phoenixville Area)
Schools (filed by school name)
Sports
Telecommunication
Theatrical (amateur)
Tools and equipment
Townships
Transportation (local transportation)
Valley Forge General Hospital
Valley Forge National Park.
FINDING INFORMATION

Computer Database:
Additions to the Society archives and collections have been entered into a database which is accessible to researchers. Specific directions for using the “search engine” are printed adjacent to the computer in the library/office area. All records are now on the database.

Card Catalogue:
A 3 x 5 Card Catalog File is located in the middle of the office area. There are two kinds of cards are in this file - “main entry” and “cross-reference”.

MAIN ENTRY - Depending on the material being cataloged, the main entry may be the author of a book or article, or the principal subject to which the material refers. The back of the main entry will show what cross-references are made to the item cataloged. This is called “tracing”. The primary subject on the main entry card is in capitalized and put in the top left-hand corner. In the bottom left hand corner is the capitalized subject file name where the information can be found. The catalog number is below the subject file name.

CROSS-REFERENCE - These cards indicate other subjects, which may be relevant to the cataloged material or are mentioned in the text of an item. The “other subjects” are capitalized and indented on the first line in the top left-hand corner above the main entry. The cross-reference file card reads the same as the main entry card. All cross reference cards are filled alphabetically by the entry on the top line.

Through the use of this card file the researcher will be able to determine the file location of the main subject and on the reverse side of the card will be aware of the related subjects. These related subjects could also be main subjects and should be researched to narrow the search.

Note: The card catalogue is not up-to-date. A faster, more complete search can be done by using the computer database.

AVAILABLE RESOURCES

HSPA LIBRARY:
Books and materials in the HSPA Library are for reference purposes and are for use in the library only. An index of library books is kept in a large white notebook on the right hand top shelf. Book titles are arranged by subject as follows:

Borough
Chester County
Churches
Commercial
Fiction
Genealogy

Household
Military History
Museum
Pennsylvania History
Phoenix Iron
Phoenixville

HISTORIC DISTRICT SURVEY CARDS:
In the 1980s a portion of the borough was designated as a “historic district.” Every building within the designated area was photographed and surveyed. The survey cards are kept in a separate file, with listings by street name and number.

NEWSPAPER RECORDS:
The Society has on microfilm all known existing issues of Phoenixville newspapers dating back to 1871. They are located in the microfilm cabinet located in the computer room adjacent to the microfilm reader/printer. Issues are not indexed, but are in chronological order. Time limit restrictions on individual use of the microfilm reader, charges for use of the reader, and copying charges are posted.
PHOTOGRAPHS, PICTURES, PICTURE POSTCARDS:
Photographs and picture postcards are kept in a special photo storage cabinet. The Card Catalogue or Database will identify the item as a picture by listing a parenthetical number following the accession number. This parenthetical number gives to the researcher the file location within our Picture File. The pictures in each file are arranged in accession number order.
The subjects covered are:
(1) Bridges
(2) Cemeteries
(3) Churches
(4) Events
(5) Factories & Mills
(6) Firehouses
(7) Funeral Homes
(8) Hospitals
(9) Hotels
(10) Land Transportation - Railroads, trolleys, etc.
(11) Office Buildings
(12) Organizations
(13) Parks and Monuments
(14) Residences
(15) Schools
(16) Stores
(17) Streets & Roads
(18) Theaters
(19) Water Transportation - canal, river, etc.
(20) Waterways
(21) Miscellaneous - albums, unidentified pictures, views
(22) Public Buildings
(23) Costumes
(24) Photographers, local
(25) Slides
(26) Military
(27) Negatives
(28) Utilities

In some instances, the pictures are included in the vertical files and do not have a parenthetical number listed. Large and framed pictures are stored in one of the storage rooms upstairs.
These areas are restricted to staff only.

ITEMS AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE
The Society offers books, booklets, maps and some other items for sale. Samples of the books are in the racks by the northern door of the office. A price list is posted on the wall adjacent to the rack.
The most popular items are:
1. *The Annals of Phoenixville and its Vicinity*
The history of the area from 1713 to 1871 written by Samuel Whitaker Pennypacker
2. *“The Nail Factory”*
The history of Phoenixville centered on the iron and steel industry
Written and illustrated by Miriam Clegg
3. *“Phoenixville’s Noted Politician, Samuel Whitaker Pennypacker 1843-1916”*
Biography written by Miriam Clegg with illustrations by Jane Ritchey
4. *“A Phoenixville Journey Past - Present - Future”*
Essays on local history written by students of the Schuylkill Elementary School Fourth Grade
Published by the Kiwanis Club of Phoenixville.
5. *Maps*
Borough of Phoenixville, Charlestown, Schuylkill, East Pikeland and East Vincent Townships
Reproductions of 19th century maps printed on parchment paper (suitable for framing)
ARTICLES AND DOCUMENTS:
The Society have extensive files on a wide variety of subjects. Research Aids will obtain requested files.
PERSONS USING ARCHIVAL MATERIALS ARE LIMITED TO ONE FILE AT A TIME AND ARE TO WORK ONLY AT DESIGNATED AREAS AND UNDER THE OBSERVATION OF THE STAFF. ARCHIVAL MATERIALS ARE NOT AVAILABLE FOR BORROWING.

GENEALOGY RESOURCES

Vertical Files:
The main archival files are in the file cabinets labeled Genealogy - Family Name. Some of the Genealogy-Family Names have full genealogies; others have only brief snippets of information. Family names also appear as cross-references on other 3x5 archival file cards.

Obituaries, Weddings, Birthdays, Wedding Anniversaries and Profiles:
Three drawers of newspaper clippings, collected from 1983, are in alphabetical order mounted on both sides of stiff paper. These listings are included on a computer database.

Birth and Death Notices:
Phoenixville Board of Health records covering the births (1891 - 1907) and death (1891 - 1906).
Chester County Death Records from 1893 to 1900
Bishop Funeral Home records from 1890 - 1971.

Books on Genealogy in the HSPA Library:
We have guidebooks that tell how to do genealogical research on the bookshelves. Guides to the Pennsylvania archives and the names of area historical societies are available. These volumes on the shelves may also prove helpful:

Guide to Records of the Court of Common Pleas, Chester County 1681-1900
Abstracts of Chester County, Pennsylvania Land Records (5 volumes cover 1681-1765)
Wills of Chester County, Pennsylvania (Five volumes 1713 to 1815)
Chester County Medical Practitioners to 1940
Chester County Legal Practitioners to 1940
Pennsylvania Births, Chester County, 1682-1800
Records of Pennsylvania Volunteers in the Spanish-American War, 1898
Heads of Families at the First Census of the United States in the Year 1790, for PA

The following three books give names, addresses and profession or trade of persons:
Business and Residence Directory of Phoenixville, PA 1897-1898
Polk’s Phoenixville (Chester County, PA) Directory (Multiple volumes 1962-64-65)
Boyd’s Chester County Directory (Volumes cover 1896-1905)

COPYING/PHOTOGRAPHING MATERIALS:
MATERIALS MAY BE COPIED BY STAFF FOR RESEARCHERS. COPYING CHARGES ARE POSTED. VISITORS MAY PHOTOGRAPH ARCHIVAL MATERIALS OR MUSEUM ITEMS USING DIGITAL CAMERAS.
HSPA RESEARCH FEES:

Museum Visitation  
Free to All [Donations Accepted]

Use of Research Library and Archives  
$5 Adults/ $2 Students  
[Free to HSPA Members]

Use of Microfilm Reader  
$2 (guaranteed ½ hour)  
[Free to HSPA Members]

Microfilm Copies  
$.50/ page

Copy Machine  
Members]  
$.25/ page [first page free to HSPA Members]

Mail Requests for Research  
$25/ Hour (one hour minimum)  
[$15/ Hour for HSPA Members]

*HSPA Members receive a 10% discount on all books and publications and other sale items.*

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