

Germantown Historical Society oral history projects

31

Finding aid prepared by Celia Caust-Ellenbogen and Michael Gubicza through the Historical Society of Pennsylvania's Hidden Collections Initiative for Pennsylvania Small Archival Repositories.

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Germantown Historical Society

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Summary Information

Repository	Germantown Historical Society
Creator	Germantown Historical Society.
Title	Germantown Historical Society oral history projects
Call number	31
Date	circa 1992-1993
Extent	10 linear feet
General Physical Description note	7 document boxes and about 140 tapes
Language	English
Abstract	<p>Germantown and Mount Airy are neighborhoods in the northwest section of Philadelphia which underwent dramatic demographic change, from nearly all Caucasian to significantly African-American, over the course of the 20th century. During the early 1990s, the Germantown Historical Society, in conjunction with other groups, conducted three oral history projects. The Germantown Historical Society oral history projects, circa 1992-1993, contains about 140 tapes of interviews, as well as some transcripts, interviewee data sheets, and other associated documents. The three oral history projects focused on the topics of Integration in West Mount Airy, African-Americans in Germantown between the World Wars, and Awbury Arboretum.</p>

Biography/History

Germantown and Mount Airy are neighborhoods in the northwest section of Philadelphia which underwent dramatic demographic change, from nearly all Caucasian to significantly African-American, over the course of the 20th century. During the early 1990s, the Germantown Historical Society, in conjunction with other groups, conducted three oral history projects on Integration in West Mount Airy, African-Americans in Germantown between the World Wars, and Awbury Arboretum.

The Pelham Centennial Oral History Project, was sponsored by West Mt. Airy Neighbors and the Germantown Historical Society, and was funded in part by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission. This project recorded approximately 30 oral history interviews with past and present residents of Pelham/West Mt. Airy. The focus of the project was to record the recollections of the people of the neighborhood regarding racial integration during the 1950s. The focus of the interview questions was on people's experiences, the changes of institutions and businesses, and what conditions allowed the community to achieve a peaceful and stable integration.

In 1991, the Germantown Historical Society initiated an oral history project in conjunction with the Philadelphia Alumni Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta and with assistance from the William Penn Foundation and the Samuel Fels Foundation. The project collected remembrances of the older African-American Germantown residents through taped interviews. The most common themes discussed in these interviews were education and recreation activities during the time between the World Wars.

The Germantown Historical Society conducted an oral history project focusing on the Awbury Arboretum, a 55-acre public park and historic house. During this project the society interviewed Awbury Arboretum staff and neighbors regarding the property's history.

Scope and Contents

This collection consists of about 140 audiocassettes from three oral history projects on the topics of Integration in West Mount Airy, African-Americans in Germantown between the World Wars, and Awbury Arboretum. There are also boxes of transcripts, interviewee data sheets and permission forms, lists of interviewees in projects II and III, and other associated documents.

The first oral history project, on integration in West Mount Airy in the 1950s, consists of 38 tapes from the Pelham Centennial Oral History Project, circa 1992-1993. Interviewees were asked questions on such topics as where they lived before coming to West Mount Airy, what prompted their decision to move to the area, memories about the racial make-up of neighborhoods, and reactions as demographics shifted.

The second oral history project, on African-Americans experiences in Germantown between World War I and World War II, consists of about 72 tapes, circa 1992-1993. The interviewees were questioned about

where they lived before coming to Germantown, their decision to move to Germantown, recollections about political views, memories of black-owned businesses, and other topics.

The third oral history project, on Awbury Arboretum, includes 27 tapes, circa 1992-1993.

Administrative Information

Germantown Historical Society

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Sponsor

This preliminary finding aid was created as part of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania's Hidden Collections Initiative for Pennsylvania Small Archival Repositories. The HCI-PSAR project was made possible by a grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Access Restrictions

Contact Germantown Historical Society for information about accessing this collection.

Immediate Source of Acquisition Note

Oral history interviews taped by Germantown Historical Society, circa 1992-1993.

Controlled Access Headings

Corporate Name(s)

- Awbury Arboretum Association.

Geographic Name(s)

- Germantown (Philadelphia, Pa.)

- Mount Airy (Philadelphia, Pa.)
- Philadelphia (Pa.)

Subject(s)

- African Americans
- Community development, Urban
- Racial discrimination
- Segregation