

Hatfield and Hibernia Park records

RG.3250.010

Finding aid prepared by Holly Mengel.

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Chester County Archives

2011.07.29

Table of Contents

Summary Information.....	3
Biography/History.....	4
Scope and Contents.....	5
Administrative Information.....	7
Collection Inventory.....	9
Series I. Hatfield House records.....	9
Series II. Hibernia estate records.....	11

Summary Information

Repository	Chester County Archives
Title	Hatfield and Hibernia Park records
Call number	RG.3250.010
Date [inclusive]	1743-1975
Extent	7 linear feet
Language	English
Abstract	<p>The County of Chester owns the Hatfield and Hibernia estates, both of which played parts in the early iron industry in Pennsylvania. The families who lived on those estates (the Hatfields, Downings, Brookes and Swaynes, to name only a few) were involved with other ventures such as a general store and a convalescence home. The Hatfield and Hibernia Park records document the families, businesses, and property transfers of the families living in the Hatfield and Hibernia homes from the 1700s to the 1900s. Researchers interested in land and property records, iron works, 19th century general stores, and rest homes will find this collection to be extremely valuable.</p>

Cite as:

[Description and date of item], [Box/folder number], Hatfield and Hibernia Park records, 1743-1975, RG 3250.010, Chester County Archives.

Biography/History

The Chester County Commissioners appointed the Park and Recreation Board on January 1, 1958. It consisted of three executive members and eleven committee members that met monthly, sometimes with the County Planning Commission. The first three purchases of the Board were the "Barrens" or Nottingham Park in 1961, Hibernia Park in 1963, and Warwick Park in 1968. The Hatfield Memorial House and adjoining property and buildings were willed to Chester and Lancaster Counties as a convalescent home in 1918 and opened in 1925.

The Hatfield family was well known in the iron making industry across Pennsylvania. The "West Brandywine Rolling Mill at Wagontown, forty miles west of Philadelphia on the West Branch Brandywine Creek, two and a half miles north of Coatesville, Chester County, Pennsylvania, [was] owned by Samuel Hatfield and managed by Benjamin R. Hatfield," (Lesley, page 233). Built in 1840, the mill was enlarged in 1843, with "four ... heating furnaces and two trains of rolls, driven by water power," (Lesley, page 233). However, "the rolling mills at Hibernia, Hatfield and Laurel, financially weakened by the Panic of 1873, were abandoned in the late 1870s and early 1880s," (Smith, page 10).

The Hatfield ancestral estate in Wagontown, Chester County was willed to Lancaster and Chester Counties by Mrs. Mary Florence Hatfield as a convalescent home in 1918. In 1925, the Hatfield Memorial home was opened after a building conversion costing \$75,000. This convalescent home cared only for white Americans with curable diseases. Patients were recommended by their hospital or physician with an initial stay of two weeks, although doctors could extend their stay for up to six weeks. Patients too poor to pay the fees were treated without payment. A Board of Trustees consisted of three Lancaster and four Chester County representatives, with two being physicians, as required by Mrs. Hatfield's will. The first Board consisted of Herbert W. Hartman, Edward R. Heitshu, and Dr. Frank Alleman from Lancaster County and Dr. Thomas Richmond, Colonel A.M. Holding, Horace A. Beale, Jr., and H. Graham Rambo from Chester County. Horace A. Beale, Jr. served as head of the Board.

The Hibernia Forge, later the Hibernia Iron Works, was built along the Brandywine in 1794 by Samuel Downing. Along with several other iron making ventures in the area, the Hibernia Forge resulted in prosperity and progress in Chester County, Pennsylvania.

Samuel Downing, the son of John and Elizabeth Downing, purchased significant portions of land in the area and built the first forge at Hibernia on the West Branch of the Brandywine to convert pig iron into bar iron. By 1799, "the iron works were a self-sustaining community [whose] inhabitants could purchase almost all the items necessary for every-day living at the store on the property," (Nagy, page 141). Despite the early success of the forge, on February 12, 1808, Downing's property was sold at sheriff's sale as a result of "money owed to [Robert Coleman] which was not settled," (Nagy, page 141). Between 1808 and 1821, the land passed through several owners, including Hunt Downing, Samuel's brother; Jacob Holderman; and Bernard Vanleer and Company. Bernard Vanleer and Company purchased Hibernia Iron Works on September 16, 1811, but "nothing is known of the production at Hibernia during [this time] though an iron furnace was constructed during this period [and] the iron works was ... able to produce its own pig iron," (Nagy, page 141). Severe flooding of the Brandywine Creek in 1814 damaged the Hibernia Iron Works, and the forge was sold in 1817 to James and Samuel Russell, and

then again, in 1821, to Charles Brooke, who purchased additional land and became "its most prosperous ironmaster," (CCPR). By 1850, Hibernia Iron Works included "two iron forges, two heating furnaces, a rolling mill, a grist mill, the mansion and several houses for the employed families [as well as] a farm, gardens, orchards, and other improvements," (CCPR). After a period of ill health, during which he transferred the forge to his sons Charles E. Brooke, Horace L. Brooke and Henry L. Brook, Charles Brooke died on July 18, 1866.

Later in 1866, Horace A. Beale leased the Hibernia Iron Works and worked there until 1870, when he moved to and established the Parkesburg Iron Works. Again, the Hibernia Iron Works passed through several owners including Louisa C.B. Wickersham and Helen T. Brooke, Messrs. Goodman and Philips, Patrick Flynn, William Struthers Freeman, Thomas Costigan, his widow Margaret Costigan, and her new husband James Ayres.

On October 18, 1894, Colonel Franklin Swayne and his wife Dorothy purchased the Hibernia Iron works, consisting of 522 acres, from James and Margaret Ayres. Swayne was a Philadelphia real estate lawyer and a fox hunting enthusiast who desired a "'gentleman country estate' [in which to entertain and] host grand Christmas parties in the English tradition," (CCPR). Over the years, the Swaynes added to the mansion and Colonel Swayne "managed several enterprises such as farming, sheep raising, and ice selling, but complained that none were successful financial ventures," (CCPR). In 1924, Franklin Swayne died and he left the estate to Mary Skerrett Matteson who used it as a summer home until she sold it to Chester County in 1963. On October 24, 1964, the estate was opened as a park and included a 24-room English-style mansion which was built in 1800, 700 acres, five stone cottages, a stone barn, a carriage house and the Hibernia Methodist Church which was built in 1841.

Bibliography:

Chester County Parks and Recreation Department. Hibernia Mansion. <http://dsf.chesco.org/ccparks/cwp/view.asp?a=1550&q=616010> (accessed September 12, 2010).

Lesley, J.P. *The Iron Manufacturer's Guide to the Furnaces, Forges and Rolling Mills of the United States*. New York: John Wiley Publisher, 1859.

Nagy, John C. "History of Hibernia Iron Works," *History Quarterly*, Vol. 32, No. 4, October 1994.

Smith, Richard P., Jr. "200 Years of Rolling on the Brandywine" http://www.arcelormittal.com/plateinformation/documents/en/Inlandflats/TechnicalPaperStudy/200_Years_of_Rolling_on_the_Brandywine.pdf (accessed September 12, 2010).

Scope and Contents

The Hatfield and Hibernia Park records document the families, businesses and property transfers of the families living in the Hatfield and Hibernia homes from the 1700s to the 1900s prior to the properties becoming a park. The bulk of the material relates to land and property ownership and transfers. This

collection is arranged into two series, "I. Hatfield House records," and "II. Hibernia estate records." The bulk of the materials in this collection document the Hatfield House.

The first series, "I. Hatfield house records" contains material regarding the Wagontown property on which the Hatfield house, the Hatfield Store, the W.B. Iron Works, and the Hatfield Memorial Home existed from the 18th to the 20th centuries, prior to becoming a Chester County park. This series is divided into four subseries: "a. Hatfield family and property records," "b. Hatfield Store records," "c. W.B. Iron Works," and "d. Hatfield Memorial Home."

The "a. Hatfield family and property records" subseries is the largest in the collection and contains many deeds relating to the land on which the Hatfield house stands, as well as land in Caln Township, West Caln, Brandywine, and Philadelphia. In addition, there are records of lease and release and mortgages. Philadelphia property records include leases, deeds, receipts of rent and work done, and tax receipts. This subseries also documents the Hatfield family through clippings regarding the family and its businesses, genealogical tables and narratives, and wills. The family material appears to relate mostly to Benjamin C. Hatfield's family. Materials date from 1737 to 1975 and are arranged alphabetically.

The second subseries, "b. Hatfield Store records," includes five account books dating from 1803 to 1867. These account books include store accounts with names of purchasers, dates, amounts of goods bought, amounts owed and amounts paid. These volumes are arranged chronologically.

The "c. W.B. Iron Works" subseries, includes two volumes: a day book containing accounts with W.B. Iron Works and a ledger containing records of buying iron. These accounts include names of purchasers, dates, amount of iron bought, amounts owed and amounts paid. Both volumes date from 1865 to 1870.

The final subseries, "d. Hatfield Memorial Home" dates from circa 1900 to 1979 and contains financial records, land records, patient or "guest" information, and photographs, mostly of the Home and the Home's guests. Guest information is recorded in the account book, which contains the date, the guest's name, number of days stayed, and amount paid; applications for admission; and registers of guests, which include the guest's name, birth date and place, address, job, marital status, disease or wound from which the patient is recovering, physician's name, number of days stayed and name of person recommending the guest. This series is arranged in alphabetical order.

The second series, "II. Hibernia estate records" dates from 1756 to 1967 and contains, almost entirely, land information. The materials include brief of title; correspondence regarding land and estate transactions; deeds, drafts of property, maps, blueprints and plans; indentures; and mortgages and debt records. Files are arranged in alphabetical order.

This collection provides a unique glimpse into the land, families, and businesses of two park houses in Chester County. Researchers interested in land and property records, iron works, 19th century general stores, and rest homes will find this collection to be extremely valuable.

Administrative Information

Chester County Archives

2011.07.29

Finding aid prepared by Holly Mengel.

Sponsor

The processing of this collection was made possible through generous funding from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, administered through the Council on Library and Information Resources' "Cataloging Hidden Special Collections and Archives" Project.

Access Restrictions

This collection is open for research use, however, access to records containing information on Hatfield guests may be restricted.

Use Restrictions

Copyright restrictions may apply. Please contact the Chester County Archives with requests for copying and for authorization to publish, quote or reproduce the material.

Immediate Source of Acquisition note

Bequest of Mrs. Mary Florence Hatfield, 1918. Other papers were found within the building, in an attic trunk, in 1952.

Processing Information note

The processing of this collection was made possible through generous funding from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, administered through the Council on Library and Information Resources' "Cataloging Hidden Special Collections and Archives" Project.

This collection was *minimally processed* in 2009-2011, as part of an experimental project conducted under the auspices of the Philadelphia Area Consortium of Special Collections Libraries to help eliminate processing backlog in Philadelphia repositories. A minimally processed collection is one processed at a less intensive rate than traditionally thought necessary to make a collection ready for use by researchers. When citing sources from this collection, researchers are advised to defer to folder titles provided in the finding aid rather than those provided on the physical folder.

Employing processing strategies outlined in Mark Greene's and Dennis Meissner's 2005 article, *More Product, Less Process: Revamping Traditional Processing Approaches to Deal With Late 20th-Century Collections*, the project team tested the limits of minimal processing on collections of all types and ages,

in 23 Philadelphia area repositories. A primary goal of the project, the team processed at an average rate of 2-3 hours per linear foot of records, a fraction of the time ordinarily reserved for the arrangement and description of collections. Among other time saving strategies, the project team did not extensively review the content of the collections, replace acidic folders or complete any preservation work.

Series I. Hatfield House records

Collection Inventory

Series I. Hatfield House records.

Subseries a. Hatfield family and property records.

	Box	Folder
Clippings regarding family and businesses, 1966, 1975.	1	1
Deeds, Hatfield tract, 1743-1744.	2	1
Deeds, Hatfield tract, 1744-1749.	2	2
Deeds, Hatfield tract, 1747-1777.	2	3
Deeds, Hatfield tract, 1779-1804.	2	4
Deeds, Hatfield tract, 1808-1867.	2	5
Deed, general and miscellaneous, 1761-1825.	3	1
Deeds, related to the 492 acres in Caln Township, 1708-1720.	3	2
Deeds, related to West Caln and Brandywine, 1737-1826.	3	3
Deeds, related to West Caln and Brandywine, 1811-1828.	3	4
Deeds, related to West Caln and Brandywine, 1793-1826.	3	5
Drafts of land in West Caln, 1818-1897.	1	2
Genealogical table, circa 1886.	1	3

Subseries b. Hatfield Store records

Genealogy, circa 1950.	1	4
Lease and release records, 1870-1891.	1	5
Mortgages for property in West Caln, 1804, 1870.	1	6
Philadelphia expenses and property records, 1792-1891.	3	6
Philadelphia expenses and property records, 1809-1829.	3	7
Wills, 1870-1930.	1	7

Subseries b. Hatfield Store records.

	Volume
Account book, 1803-1806.	1
Account book, 1823-1824.	2
Account book, 1827-1829.	3
Account book, 1864-1866.	4
Account book, 1865-1867.	5

Subseries c. W.B. Iron Works.

	Volume
Daybook (all accounts with W.B. Iron Works), 1865-1870.	6
Ledger regarding buying iron (includes index), 1865-1870.	7

Subseries d. Hatfield Memorial Home

Subseries d. Hatfield Memorial Home.

	Volume	
Account book, 1949-1978.		8
	Volume	
Applications for admissions, 1970-1979.	1	9
Brief and title and searches for home property and four wood lots (probably initiated at the founding of the Hatfield Memorial Home), 1931-1949.	1	9-10
Photographs and negatives, mostly of guests in the Hatfield home, circa 1900-1980.	1	11
Reid Title, sections A, B and C, undated.	1	12
	Volume	
Register of guests, 1933-1938.		9
Register of guests, 1939-1947.		10

Series II. Hibernia estate records.

	Box	Folder
Brief of title, land description, and right of way agreement, 1880-1934.	4	1
Correspondence regarding land and estates, 1904-1967.	4	2
Deeds, 1756-1812.	4	3
Drafts of property, maps, blueprints and plans, 1800-1900.	4	4

Series II. Hibernia estate records

Indentures (land), 1790-1914.

4

5

Mortgages and debt records, 1787-1892.

4

6