Sarah Logan Wister Starr papers

06

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

Last updated on March 25, 2015.

Philadelphia History Museum
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Summary Information

Repository         Philadelphia History Museum

Creator            Starr, Sarah Logan Wister, 1873-1956

Title              Sarah Logan Wister Starr papers

Call number        06

Date               circa 1850-1950

Extent             2.5 linear feet

Language           English

Abstract           Sarah Logan Wister Starr (1873-1956) was a Philadelphia-based philanthropist actively involved with the Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania, National League for Woman's Services, Women's Committee of the Sesqui-Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia in 1926, and other organizations and causes. In 1901, she married mining official James Starr (1870-1937); their daughter, S. Logan Wister Starr (1903-1979), married psychiatrist Dr. Daniel Blain (1898-1981). The Sarah Logan Wister Starr papers, circa 1850-1950, are largely composed of ephemera such as paper dolls and cards, but also include a significant amount of letters, scrapbooks, other manuscript materials. Sarah Logan Wister Starr and her various interests, including the Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania are predominant in the collection, although there are items associated with other family members.
Biography/History

Sarah Logan Wister Starr was born in 1873 and raised in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania and, later, at Belfield (a large house in the Germantown section of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania). Throughout her life, she was involved in a wide variety of organizations in Philadelphia and Germantown. Most notably, she served as president of the Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania from 1921 to 1941. One of her many contributions to Woman's Medical College was the establishment of the Wister Fund in 1953, which provided money to erect new buildings on the school's East Falls campus. Starr was the vice chairman of the World War I era National League for Woman's Services at the state level (Pennsylvania), as well as the Germantown branch. In that capacity, she raised two million dollars for children in Belgium. She was also chairman of the Women's Committee of the Liberty Loan program for the Federal Reserve District, and in 1917, she led the first parade for the Liberty Loan campaign in which several hundred women marched from the Women's Club of Germantown to Germantown Academy. Starr also served as president of the Colonial Dames and of the Women's Permanent Emergency Association of Germantown. She was associate trustee of the Board of Libraries at the University of Pennsylvania and served as chairman of the Germantown branch of the Civic Club. Starr was a member of the Acorn Club, Print Club, Sedgley Club, Germantown Historical Society, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, and Society for the Preservation of Landmarks. She was heavily involved in preparations for the Sesqui-Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia in 1926. She founded the Zoe Valley Library in Nova Scotia, where she summered as a child. Starr also wrote histories on her ancestral homes of Belfield and neighboring Stenton. With her cousins Frances and Anne, she published the magazine "The Sparrow." She was awarded honorary degrees from Ursinus College in 1933 and the University of Pennsylvania in 1941. She died in 1956.

In 1901, Sarah Logan Wister Starr married James Starr (1870-1937), a mining official, and settled at Belfield. James graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 1891 and Towne Scientific School in 1892. He served in the Spanish American War. The Starrs were frequent travelers, embarking on several "Round the World Cruises" during the 1930s. Sarah and James' daughter, S. Logan Wister Starr (1903-1979), married Dr. Daniel Blain (1898-1981) in 1936. Blain, the son of Presbyterian foreign missionaries, was born in Kashing, China. He was a psychiatrist who received his M.D. from Vanderbilt University in 1929. Logan and Daniel Blain's son, Daniel Blain Jr., sold the Belfield property to La Salle University in 1984.

Bibliography:

Scope and Contents

Most of the items in this collection are associated with Sarah Logan Wister Starr, although some items relate to her family members, particularly her husband James Starr and daughter S. Logan Starr (Blain). Sarah Logan Wister Starr's various philanthropic engagements and interests, including the Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania, the Sesqui-Centennial Exhibition of 1926, and world travels, are represented. The collection is largely composed of ephemera, such as paper dolls, postcards, greeting cards, calling cards, business cards, programs, and tickets. There are significant amounts of original, primary source documents as well, including letters, photographs, scrapbooks, financial records, notes, and other manuscripts.

An item-level inventory is available on-site. The Philadelphia History Museum also owns many objects and published books associated with this collection.

Administrative Information

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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 Philadelphia History Museum for information about accessing this collection.

Immediate Source of Acquisition Note
Gift of Daniel Blain, circa 1991 (accession 91.68)

Processing Information Note
Summary descriptive information on this collection was compiled in 2012–2014 as part of a project conducted by the Historical Society of Pennsylvania to make better known and more accessible the largely hidden collections of small, primarily volunteer run repositories in the Philadelphia area. The
Hidden Collections Initiative for Pennsylvania Small Archival Repositories (HCI-PSAR) was funded by a grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

This is a preliminary finding aid. No physical processing, rehousing, reorganizing, or folder listing was accomplished during the HCI-PSAR project.

In some cases, more detailed inventories or finding aids may be available on-site at the repository where this collection is held; please contact Philadelphia History Museum directly for more information.

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**Related Materials**

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**Related Archival Materials Note**


La Salle University, Connelly Library: Starr family papers, 1889-1992, Call number F159.G3 S8.

Fairmount Park Historic Resource Archives: Loudoun Mansion Recovery collection, circa 1900s, collection 2008.001.

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**Controlled Access Headings**

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**Corporate Name(s)**

- Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania

**Geographic Name(s)**

- Germantown (Philadelphia, Pa.)
- Philadelphia (Pa.)

**Personal Name(s)**
• Blain, S. Logan Starr, 1903-1979
• Starr, James, 1870-1937
• Starr, James, Mrs.
• Starr, Sarah Logan Wister, 1873-1956

Subject(s)

• Paper dolls
• Sesqui-Centennial International Exposition (1926 : Philadelphia, Pa.)
• Societies and clubs
• Upper class
• Women philanthropists