

# **Potts-Rutter family papers**

**08**

**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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Last updated on November 09, 2012.

Pottstown Historical Society

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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository</b>	Pottstown Historical Society
<b>Creator</b>	Rutter family
<b>Title</b>	Potts-Rutter family papers
<b>Call number</b>	08
<b>Date [inclusive]</b>	1714-1936
<b>Extent</b>	1.5 linear feet
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Abstract</b>	<p>John Potts (1710-1768), the founder of Pottstown, Pennsylvania, was a prominent business man and ironmaster. Potts's descendants intermarried frequently with the Rutter family, and the Potts and Rutter names remained prominent in southeastern Pennsylvania. They founded several important iron furnaces and were active in politics and community life. The Potts-Rutter family papers, 1714-1936, consist of scattered original papers of Potts and Rutter family members, as well as some genealogical research. The original papers include indentures and deeds (1714-1882), correspondence, marriage certificates, and other miscellaneous documents; there is a small amount of financial records from Warwick Furnace.</p>

## Biography/History

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"Thomas Rutter, an English blacksmith who had first settled near Germantown, established his first forge on Manatawny Creek in Berks County in 1716. Around 1720, he also constructed the Colebrook Furnace on nearby Ironstone Creek. Pine Forge followed in 1725. Rutter secured the services of Thomas Potts, Sr., as ironmaster, and he had assumed the active management of the enterprises well before Rutter's death in 1730. The family alliance was cemented by the marriages of each of Potts' three sons, John (1710-1768), Thomas (1720-1762), and David (1722-1752), to Rutter's granddaughters.

"John Potts (1710-1768) took over the leadership of the family business and greatly enlarged its scope. Thomas Potts, Jr. (1735-1785) and Thomas Rutter, III (1731-1795) handled the marketing of iron in Philadelphia. John Potts' wife, Ruth Savage, was a descendant of another pioneer ironmaster, Samuel Nutt (d. 1740). John Potts thus inherited a share in the Nutt enterprises, which included Coventry Forge (1718), the Reading Furnaces (1733 and 1736), and the Warwick Furnace (1737). All of these ironworks were located along French Creek south of the Schuylkill River. Warwick Furnace was one of the largest producers of iron in the Colonies. In the 1750s, John Potts also purchased the Mount Joy or Valley Forge (built 1742) and built the Pottsgrove Forge (1752) near the mouth of Manatawny Creek. At this last site, he laid out the town of Pottstown in 1761.

"After John Potts died in 1768, the most important properties, including Warwick and Colebrookdale (now only operated for its mines), passed to his second son, Samuel (1736-1793) and his son-in-law, Thomas Rutter, III. In 1792, they added the Joanna Furnace on Hay Creek, named for Samuel's wife. Glasgow Forge, near Pottstown, was purchased from Archibald McCall in 1772. Reading Furnace was abandoned for lack of fuel, but they repurchased the property for its ore mines during the Revolutionary War, when Warwick was turning out cannon for the Continental Army.

"John Potts' oldest son, Thomas, Jr. (1735-1785) operated the Coventry Forge and rebuilt the old Nutt steel furnace there, but he lived in Philadelphia where he could better attend to the merchandising side of the iron trade. Coventry Forge and Joanna Furnace passed to his son Thomas (1777-1814), and he sold Coventry to his brother-in-law, Robert May, in 1791.

"The fourth and fifth sons of John Potts, David (1741-1798) who inherited Pine Forge, and Joseph (1742-1804) who inherited Valley Forge, were also Philadelphia merchants. Pottsgrove Forge was abandoned for lack of fuel around the time of John Potts' death. Valley Forge was destroyed by a British raid in 1777. Warwick Furnace passed to Samuel's oldest son, David (d. 1834) and finally closed in 1867. David also built the Vincent Slitting Mill on French Creek in 1793 and, with his brothers John (1760-1809) and Thomas (d. 1823), he organized and operated the Copper Mine Company of Pennsylvania. Glasgow Forge passed to Samuel's youngest son Joseph (1766-1824) and was in operation until 1847. Pine Forge was inherited by Thomas Rutter III's son David (1766-1817), who married a niece of Samuel Potts. It remained in the Rutter family until 1843."

### Bibliography:

Quoted text from: Finding aid for Potts-Rutter families papers [microfilm], 1714-1839. Hagley Museum and Library - Manuscripts and Archives Department. Accessed April 27, 2012. <http://beta.worldcat.org/>

archivegrid/record.php?id=122458051&contributor=388&archivename=Hagley+Museum+and+Library+-+Manuscripts+and+Archives+Department.

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## Scope and Contents

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This collection consists of scattered original papers of Potts and Rutter family members, as well as some genealogical research on the family. The original papers include indentures and deeds (1714-1882), correspondence, marriage certificates, and other miscellaneous documents. There is a small amount of financial records from Warwick Furnace. The genealogical research includes Rutter family data sheets, research specifically on Samuel Potts, and general Rutter/Potts genealogy notes.

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## Administrative Information

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Pottstown Historical Society

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.

### 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 Pottstown Historical Society for information about accessing this collection.

### Processing Information Note

Summary descriptive information on this collection was compiled in 2011-2012 as part of a pilot 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 Pottstown Historical Society directly for more information.

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## Related Materials

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### Related Archival Materials Note

Pottsgrove Manor: Potts family papers, 1720-circa 1905.

Historical Society of Pennsylvania: Belfield papers, 1697-1977, Col. 3159.

Historical Society of Pennsylvania: Potts family papers, 1733-1874, Col. 520.

Hagley Museum and Library: Potts-Rutter families papers [microfilm], 1714-1839.

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## Controlled Access Headings

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### Corporate Name(s)

- Warwick Furnace (Chester County, Pa.).

### Family Name(s)

- Potts family
- Rutter family

### Geographic Name(s)

- Montgomery County (Pa.)
- Pottstown (Pa.)

**Personal Name(s)**

- Potts, John, 1710-1768

**Subject(s)**

- Genealogy
- Iron founding
- Ironwork, Colonial