

# **Kennett Township Historical Commission subject files**

**02**

**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.**

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Last updated on December 11, 2014.

Kennett Township Historical Commission

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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository</b>	Kennett Township Historical Commission
<b>Creator</b>	Kennett Township Historical Commission
<b>Title</b>	Kennett Township Historical Commission subject files
<b>Call number</b>	02
<b>Date [bulk]</b>	1980-2014
<b>Date [inclusive]</b>	1847-2014
<b>Extent</b>	10 linear feet
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Abstract</b>	<p>The first recorded mention of "Kennett Township" in Chester County, Pennsylvania is from 1705. An abolitionist stronghold, Kennett was popular with freedom-seekers escaping slavery prior to the Civil War due to the presence of progressive Quakers and a community of free blacks that was established as early as 1830. Later, the Kennett area became known for producing more than half of the mushrooms consumed in the United States. The Kennett Township Historical Commission subject files, 1847-2014 (bulk 1980-2014), focus on people, places, organizations, buildings, and events of Kennett Township. The files consist mainly of secondary-source materials, such as clippings, pamphlets/ephemera, and family genealogies, as well as a small amount of primary-source materials.</p>

## Biography/History

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The area that is now Kennett Township in Chester County, Pennsylvania was inhabited by the Lenni-Lenape people when the land was acquired by William Penn in 1681. The first recorded mention of the name "Kennett Township" was in 1705. The Borough of Kennett Square, which is surrounded on all sides by Kennett Township, but has its own separate governing body, was incorporated in 1855.

Kennett Township has a strong Quaker heritage, since many early settlers were members of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). The area was a popular stop along the "Underground Railroad" for freedom-seekers escaping slavery prior to the Civil War, due to the presence of abolitionist Quakers such as John and Hannah Cox, Dinah and Isaac Mendenhall, and Dr. Bartholomew Fussell, as well as a community of free blacks that was established as early as 1830. The Pennsylvania Yearly Meeting of Progressive Friends, an activist Quaker off-shoot dedicated to progressive issues including abolitionism, women's rights, and temperance, was formed in the township prior to 1850.

The Kennett area was primarily agricultural for most of its history, but over the course of the 20th century it came to specialize in one particular food: mushrooms. William Swayne, a florist from Kennett Square, imported mushroom spores from England about 1885 and built the first mushroom house in the area. The venture was successful, and with the expansion of Swayne's and similar operations, the Kennett area became world renowned for its mushrooms. As of 2014, over 65 percent of the mushrooms consumed in the United States are grown in Southern Chester County.

Many properties in Kennett Township are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, including: Old Kennett Meetinghouse, built in 1710 by members of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers); Harlan Log House, an English-style log cabin built about 1715; and the Hamorton Historic District, laid out in 1830s and developed by Pierre S. du Pont into a company town in the early 20th century. Also on the National Register of Historic Places is Longwood Gardens, one of the most popular attractions in Southern Chester County (Pennsylvania) with over 1,000 acres of landscaped gardens, greenhouses, and plant collections. About one-third of the property is located in Kennett Township.

### **Bibliography:**

Kennett Township. "History of Kennett Township." Condensed from 1971 comprehensive plan. Accessed July 9, 2014. <http://kennett.pa.us/visitors/history-of-kennett-township/>.

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## Scope and Contents

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This collection consists mainly of secondary-source materials, such as: newspaper clippings, articles, and research; pamphlets, newsletters, reports, and other organizational ephemera; family genealogies and obituaries; correspondence on local history activities and events; and a smattering of photographs, slides,

document transcriptions, personal correspondence, and other materials. The collection covers people, places, organizations, buildings, and events of Kennett Township (Chester County, Pa.) and nearby areas.

The bulk of the collection is in files organized alphabetically by subject as follows (list is accurate as of June 2010; files are added and amended over time so contact the Kennett Township Historical Commission for updated information):

- Agriculture (see also Mushrooms)
- American Flag
- Anson B. Nixon Park
- Anvil
- ARC Stones (DE/PA Boundary Markers) (see also Mason Dixon)
- Baltimore Pike (see Roads)
- Barns
- Battle of the Brandywine (2005 Program)
- Becker, Melchior
- Bloomfield
- Bridges
- Bucktoe Cemetery and Church
- Buffington
- Bucktails (2010 Program)
- Calendars - area historic views
- Chandler Mill and Bridge
- Chandler Tract (see Lewis Pierce House)
- Chester County Historical Preservation
- Chester County History
- Churches
- Civil War
- Clifton Farms (see James Cloud House)
- Cloud (Cloud/Morse; James Cloud House)
- Darlington
- Declaration of Independence
- Delaware
- Fairville/Hogtown
- Friends Meetings
- Genealogy
- Gilbert Potter House
- Greenwood Farm (Abner Marshall House)
- Greenwood Farm (Stewart Farm)
- Greenwood Hall
- Greenwood School (see Schools)
- Gregg (see Joseph Gregg House)
- Guthrie, Marion B.
- Hamorton/Logtown
- Hannum (J. Frank Hannum Diary; Thomas Hannum house)
- Harlan House

- Historic Preservation
- Historic Pamphlets
- Historic Sites (also in Amerine cabinet)
- History (Kennett Twp.; Miscellaneous)
- Harty, John - newspaper history articles
- Indians/Indian Hannah (2009 Program)
- Joseph Gregg House
- Kendal
- Kennett Grange (aka Greenwood School)
- Kennett Pike/State Route 52 (see Roads)
- Kennett Square
- Kennett Township Historical Commission Ordinance and History
- Landscape Views
- Land Trust (now Land Conservancy of Southern Chester County)
- Lewis Pierce Farmhouse
- Longwood Gardens
- Longwood Progressive Friends Meeting
- Maps
- Maps (other than Kennett Township)
- Marshall (Marshall's Mill; Sharpless Marshall; Tom Marshall)
- Mason Dixon Line and Trail
- McCord House - Fairville Road
- Mendenhall - Village and Family
- Mercer, Mary Swayne
- Miller/Martin Farmhouse
- Mills (2007 Program)
- Miscellaneous
- Mushroom Growing
- New Garden Township
- Newsletters
- Newsletters
- Obituaries
- Old Kennett Meeting
- Oral Histories
- Passmore
- Peirce's Park (see Longwood Gardens)
- Photography
- Photos - inventory of albums
- Pierce
- Potter (see Gilbert Potter house)
- Railroad (see Trains & Trolleys)
- Red Clay Creek
- Red Lion
- Republican Centennial 1855-1955
- Roads (Kennett Pike/State Rt. 52; Route 1; Township)

- Rodebaugh, Paul - Newspaper History Articles
- Rosedale
- Route 1 (see Roads)
- Sandy Flash
- Schools (2006 Program)
- Sears Houses
- Site Survey 1990 & 2008
- Springdale Farm/Mendenhall Family (see also Mendenhall)
- Stenning Manor (Steyning)
- Swedish Cabin (see also Cloud/Morse)
- Taylor, Bayard
- The Pines/Fussell-Stebbins
- Thompson Memoir
- Trains and Trolleys (2008 Program)
- Tricentennial Celebration - 1982
- Underground Railroad
- Wiley, Bernard

In addition, the collection includes binders that primarily cover programs run by the Kennett Township Historical Commission: Brandywine Battle, One-Room Schoolhouses, Mills, Trains and Trolleys, Indians, Bucktails, "Walkin' the Line," The British are Coming, Barns of Kennett Township, Photos, Woodward-Mattson family newsletters. There are also maps, mostly late 20th and early 21st century, and a Breous Farm Atlas (1883).

Some newspapers, including the first issue of the *Daily Local News* (1872) are also part of this collection. There is a clippings scrapbook on Kennett Township local history compiled by James H. Gawthrop, circa 1940.

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## Administrative Information

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Kennett Township Historical Commission

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.

### 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 Kennett Township Historical Commission for information about accessing this collection.

## **Immediate Source of Acquisition Note**

Materials collected by the Kennett Township Historical Commission over time.

## **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 Kennett Township Historical Commission directly for more information.

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## **Controlled Access Headings**

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### **Geographic Name(s)**

- Chester County (Pa.)
- Kennett (Pa. : Township)

### **Subject(s)**

- Genealogy
- Local history