

Women's Committee of the Philadelphia Sesqui-Centennial International Exposition of 1926 records

03

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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Strawberry Mansion

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Summary Information

Repository	Strawberry Mansion
Creator	Women's Committee of the Philadelphia Sesqui-Centennial International Exposition of 1926.
Title	Women's Committee of the Philadelphia Sesqui-Centennial International Exposition of 1926 records
Call number	03
Date [bulk]	1926
Date [inclusive]	1921-1927
Extent	7.25 linear feet
Language	English
Abstract	The Women's Committee of the Philadelphia Sesquicentennial Exposition of 1926 was formed to promote, raise funds, and create exhibits for the exposition. One of their most ambitious and popular exhibits was High Street, a recreation of early American life through buildings and period reenactment. The Women's Committee records, 1921-1927, contain administrative and financial records as well as ephemera generated by the committee.

Biography/History

To celebrate the 150-year anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, Philadelphia was chosen as the site of a grand world's fair in 1926. Several years into the planning, the Sesqui-Centennial Exhibition Association was suffering bad publicity due to budget problems and accusations of mishandling funds. A Women's Committee, comprised of some of the most influential women in Philadelphia at the time, was formed and met for the first time in October of 1925. The goal of this committee was to change the public perception of the Exposition, as well as create exhibitions that would attract visitors. The largest and most popular of the exhibits they created was a replica of "High Street" (present-day Market Street, Philadelphia) as it appeared in 1776. The High Street exhibit was comprised of replica homes and businesses, and was populated with docents in period dress. Though the Exposition itself was deemed a failure, the exhibits created by the Women's Committee--especially the High Street--were among its few successes.

Bibliography:

Freedman, Ellen. "The Women's Committee and Their High Street Exhibit at the Philadelphia Sesquicentennial Exposition of 1926." MS thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1988. <http://www.archive.org/details/womenscommitteet00free>.

Scope and Contents

This collection is comprised of the complete records of the Women's Committee of the Philadelphia Sesquicentennial Exhibition. The collection contains the administrative and financial records of the committee, as well as scrapbooks and ephemera. The administrative records include board minutes, reports, and correspondence, including correspondence of the Women's Foreign Committee. The financial records include account ledgers with member dues, check stubs, contacts list invoices and receipts, and bank statements. There are ten scrapbooks in the collection, which feature newspaper clippings, correspondence, reports, and Committee records dating from 1921 to 1927. Ephemera and publications, including a photograph album of the Sesquicentennial exhibition, pins, medals, brochures, and pamphlets, round out the collection.

A highlight of the collection are photographs, blueprints and plans relating to the High Street exhibit. In addition to framed certificates and photographs of High Street houses, there are approximately 30 blueprints and oversize rolled items. These include survey drawings, blueprints of High Street houses, landscape architectural drawings, grading plans, and posters.

Another collection highlight is a small amount of letters received by Howard B. French from May 1923-June 1924. French served as the Chairman of the Building and Grounds Committee for the Sesquicentennial Exhibition Association up until his death in 1924.

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 Strawberry Mansion for information about accessing this collection.

Immediate Source of Acquisition Note

Many members of the Women's Committee, including Mrs. J. Willis Martin (President), were heavily involved with the Committee of 1926 and probably brought the Women's Committee records to Strawberry Mansion.

Related Materials

Related Archival Materials Note

Historical Society of Pennsylvania: Belfield papers, Collection 3159. <http://www2.hsp.org/collections/manuscripts/b/Belfield3159.html>

Controlled Access Headings

Geographic Name(s)

- Philadelphia (Pa.)

Personal Name(s)

- French, Howard B., d. 1924
- Lowrie, Sarah Dickson, 1870-1957

Subject(s)

- Historic buildings--Conservation and restoration
- Historic preservation
- Historical reenactments
- Sesqui-Centennial International Exposition (1926 : Philadelphia, Pa.)
- Women--Societies and clubs