

# **John Lukens letters**

**01**

**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

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<b>Repository</b>	Strawberry Mansion
<b>Creator</b>	Lukens, John, 1720-1789
<b>Title</b>	John Lukens letters
<b>Call number</b>	01
<b>Date [inclusive]</b>	1763-1789
<b>Extent</b>	0.4 linear feet
<b>General Physical Description note</b>	1 document box
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Abstract</b>	John Lukens (1720-1789) served as Surveyor-General of Pennsylvania from 1761 to 1789. The John Lukens letters, 1763-1789, contain letters to Lukens, mostly relating to business, from various individuals.

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## Biography/History

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"John Lukens (1720?-1789) served as Surveyor-General of Pennsylvania and Delaware, 1761-1776, and of Pennsylvania, 1781-1789. He was born to Peter and Gaynor Lukens in probably 1720. He married his first cousin Sarah Lukens (b. 1720?) in 1741 and they produced seven children: Charles (d. 1784?), Elizabeth (d. 1793), Jesse (1748-1776), Gaynor (d. 1788), Tacy (d. 1834), Judah (d. infancy), and Edith (n.d.). Both John and Sarah were descendants of the original German immigrant families who settled

Germantown. Jan and Mary Lukens and Rynier and Margaret Tysson left Rotterdam in July 1683 and arrived in Philadelphia in October 1683.

"Lukens was involved with many influential men in Philadelphia. He co-founded the Hatsborough Public Library in 1755, and was acquainted with figures such as David Rittenhouse, Benjamin Franklin, and Francis Alison. Lukens' public position gained him a role in the team which surveyed the tangent line, middle point, and the twelve mile radius from the center of the New Castle Courthouse which formed the northern boundary of Delaware. These measurements, taken in 1762, were used by Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon in laying out the final Mason-Dixon line. Lukens belonged to learned Philadelphia associations such as the American Society for Promoting Useful Knowledge and the American Philosophical Society. Those types of associations lead to his appointment by Thomas and Richard Penn in 1761 to the position of Surveyor General.

"Lukens remained Surveyor General for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania until the American Revolution. In 1776, he was ordered to close down the land office in Philadelphia and move to Lancaster where he remained until October 1778. Until 1780, the Pennsylvania land office was essentially shut down. In 1781, the General Assembly elected Lukens to his previous position of Surveyor General for a five year term, since the position was no longer an appointed one. In 1785, he was reelected and continued in the position until his death in 1789.

"Two of John Lukens' sons, Charles and Jesse, worked for their father as Deputy Surveyors. Lawrence Keene, who was married to Lukens' daughter Gaynor, also worked for John Lukens. Each of these men had their own district, mostly in the Northeast part of Pennsylvania. Gaynor and Lawrence Keene settled on family land in Sunbury, Pennsylvania, and Lawrence worked as surveyor in that area. They had three children. Charles Lukens married Margaret Sanderson in about 1769 and together they had five children. Jesse Lukens never married. Elizabeth Lukens married Joseph Jacob Wallis in 1775 and they produced seven children.

"After John Lukens' death in 1789 his estate was administered by his grandson Lawrence Keene, Jr., and then by his granddaughter Sarah Lukens Keene. After their deaths John Lukens' great-grandchildren became the administrators of the family estate. Two of his great-grand children (Henry Edgar Keene and Ellen Keene Mitchell) filed a law-suit in 1869 against other members of the family over the liquidation of family lands, which were quite substantial because of John Lukens' many years as surveyor general."

### **Bibliography:**

Specht, Neva J. Finding aid to Lukens Family Papers, 1750-1904: MSS 161. University of Delaware Library. Accessed December 22, 2011, <http://www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec/findaids/lukens.htm>.

## Scope and Contents

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This collection consists of letters sent to Lukens from 1763-1789, mostly business relating to land surveying. It also includes a few receipts, extracts of minutes, and other assorted documents that were likely enclosed in letters. Items in the collection are arranged in chronological order.

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## Administrative Information

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### Strawberry Mansion

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 Strawberry Mansion for information about accessing this collection.

### Immediate Source of Acquisition Note

Unknown.

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## Related Materials

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### Related Archival Materials Note

American Philosophical Society: John Lukens papers, 1760-1788, Mss.B.L968.

Pennsylvania State Archives: Lukens-Lenox Papers, 1702-1900, Manuscript Group 489.

## Controlled Access Headings

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### Geographic Name(s)

- Philadelphia (Pa.)

### Subject(s)

- Land speculation
- Surveying
- United States--History--Colonial period, ca. 1600-1775
- United States--History--Revolution, 1775-1783