



The Historical
Society of
Pennsylvania

Collection 3109

**Rawle & Henderson
Collection**

1800-ca. 1962

63 volumes, 9.7 lin. feet

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Related Collections at

HSP: Rawle family papers (Collection 536)

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Abstract

Rawle & Henderson, in 1983, was recognized by the United States Senate as “the oldest law firm in continuous practice in United States.”¹ It was founded in 1783 by William Rawle (1759-1836) under the name Rawle Law Offices. Various members of the Rawle family headed the firm throughout the 1800s, including Rawle’s sons and grandsons. In 1913, the firm became know as Rawle and Henderson with the addition of Joseph W. Henderson; he became a full partner in 1917. The firm recently celebrated its 225th anniversary and continues as one of the region’s leading practices, particularly in the admiralty and maritime law.

The Rawle & Henderson collection consists of sixty-three law books kept by the firm, the earliest dating to 1800. There are published reports by William Rawle Jr. of cases heard by state Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, as well as copies of the *Laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*, 1700-1805. Additional volumes include “Paper Books” that contain reports and papers from specific cases worked by Rawle & Henderson from the 1920s to the 1950s, including several that involved the National Labor Relations Board. There are also three miscellaneous books, including a copy of *American Maritime Cases* (1932), for which Joseph Henderson served as an associate editor.

Background note

The law firm of Rawle & Henderson was founded by William Rawle (1759-1836), who rose to distinction as a Philadelphia lawyer and philanthropist. After studying law both in Philadelphia and in London, Rawle was admitted to the bar on 15 September 1783. That same year, Rawle began practicing law in Philadelphia and established the Rawle Law Offices. He quickly became one of the city’s most reputable lawyers, and was elected to the Pennsylvania Constitutional Assembly and made Pennsylvania’s first U. S. attorney. In 1827, he was named chancellor of the Law Association of Philadelphia, which would eventually become the Philadelphia Bar Association.

Rawle was also a civic leader who helped establish the Historical Society of Pennsylvania in 1824 and served as the institution’s first president. He was a member of the American

¹ “Resolution Honoring the Achievements of Rawle & Henderson LLP on its 225th Anniversary.” From http://www.rawle.com/News_Events_Events_Details.asp?EventID=74 (accessed 19 December 2008).

Philosophical Society and president of the local anti-slavery society. In addition, he served terms on the boards of the University of Pennsylvania, the Library Company of Philadelphia, and many other Philadelphia institutions.

William Rawle Jr. (1788-1858), Rawle's third son, joined the Rawle Law Offices in 1813 and, like his father, held a membership in the American Philosophical Society and positions on the boards of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the Library Company of Philadelphia, and the University of Pennsylvania. He also presided over the Philadelphia Common Council from 1836 to 1840. In addition to his own family's legacy in the legal profession, William Jr. married into a prestigious legal family—his wife, Mary Anna Tilghman, was the daughter of prominent Philadelphia lawyer Edward Tilghman and the granddaughter of Pennsylvania Chief Justice Benjamin Chew.

The next inheritor of the law firm was William Jr.'s son, William Henry Rawle (1823-1889), who became a leading constitutional lawyer. He graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 1841 and was admitted to the bar in 1844, the same year he joined the Rawle Law Offices. In 1848 and 1850, he served in the Pennsylvania Supreme Court. He also served on the Board of City Trusts, was vice president of the Law Association of Philadelphia, and, in the 1870s, was a representative of the Philadelphia Centennial Commission in the U.S. Supreme Court. He became a recognized speaker and writer, and published several works including *A Practical Treatise on the Law of Covenants for Title* (1852).

William Jr.'s grandson, William Brooke Rawle (1843-1915), joined the firm in 1867 and remained one of its leading lawyers until his death in 1915. Born William Rawle Brooke, he changed his name early in life to avoid confusion within the family. Besides having a legal career, he served in the Union cavalry during the Civil War. Throughout the rest of his life, he reflected upon and documented this experience and published several books on the subject.

Francis Rawle (1846-1930), grandson of the elder William Rawle, led the firm starting in 1878. A Harvard graduate, he was admitted to the bar in 1871. Seven years later, he helped establish the American Bar Association, became its first secretary and treasurer, and served a term as its president. He was also a prolific author and made several revisions to Bouvier's *Law Dictionary*. A keen supporter of his alma mater, from 1890 to 1902 Francis served on Harvard's Board of Overseers. And like his ancestors, he also held several local board positions and memberships in such organizations as the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the Library Company of Philadelphia, the Franklin Inn Club, and the American Philosophical Society.

A graduate of Bucknell University and Harvard Law School, Joseph W. Henderson (ca. 1890-1957) joined the Rawle Law Offices in 1913. Four years later, he was made a full partner, and the firm was renamed Rawle & Henderson. At the start of his career, he helped expand the firm's admiralty practice, and subsequently held memberships in the Maritime Society of the United States, the Port of Philadelphia Maritime Society, and served on the board of the Delaware River Port Authority. In 1943, he was elected president of the American Bar Association. He was twice elected president of Bucknell

University, in 1949 and 1953. He also served as president of the Union League in 1955 and 1956. His career included a diverse number of board positions, including those with the Philadelphia Bar Association, the City Trusts of Philadelphia, the Philadelphia Aid Society, the Presbyterian Church of Chestnut Hill, and the Tabor Home for Children.

In the early part of Rawle and Henderson's history, the firm served as a training ground for several people who would develop successful legal and judicial careers, including the Honorable Joseph Hopkinson, George Tucker Bispham, and David Paul Brown. In 1983, on the two-hundredth anniversary of its founding, the firm was officially recognized by the United States Senate, under Resolution 451, as "the oldest law firm in continuous practice in United States."²

Scope & content

The Rawle & Henderson collection highlights the work of the firm through sixty-three bound volumes of published reports on laws and cases dating from 1800 to about 1962. The volumes have been numbered in order by law or case dates and fall into five basic categories: "Laws of Pennsylvania," "Sergeant's and Rawle's reports," "Rawle's Reports," "Paper Books," and other volumes.

The first four volumes are volumes 4, 5, 6, and 7 from the *Laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* series, commonly known as the "Laws of Pennsylvania." Published in 1803 and 1806, they cover acts of Pennsylvania's General Assembly made between 1791 and 1805, such as those to establish a nightly watch (ch. 1530), to enable the governor to form a company to create a road from Philadelphia to Lancaster (ch. 1629), and to establish a board of wardens for the Port of Philadelphia (ch. 1687). Many of the acts are specific to people and places, such as an act passed 17 April 1795 for the relief of William Dunton, Bernard Merkle, and John Kline (ch. 1835), and cover a variety of topics, from the establishment of election districts to settlements for soldiers to internal improvements.

The next seventeen volumes are commonly called "Sergeant and Rawle's reports." Published between 1820 and 1847, these volumes contain reports by Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice William Rawle Jr. and Attorney General Thomas Sergeant of cases heard in the Pennsylvania Supreme Court from 1814 to 1828. The cases range from general land disputes and arbitrations to those concerning runaway and fugitive slaves (*Wright v. Deacon*, vol. 5, no. 63) and religious matters (*The Commonwealth v. Wolf*, vol. 3, no. 49). Following these reports are five similar volumes of reports published from 1829 to 1836 by William Rawle Jr. of Pennsylvania Supreme Court cases heard from 1828 to 1835.

Volumes 27 to 60 consist of reports, published testimonies, and assorted papers from various cases on which the firm Rawle & Henderson worked. Bound under the name "Paper Books," the cases date from 1921 to 1957 and cover a wide range of issues, from labor law to personal disputes. The firm argued several cases that went to the U.S.

² Ibid.

Supreme Court, including suits against the National Labor Relations Board over the right to strike, a case regarding a school district's power to require students to salute the flag, and cases dealing with trade law and ship collisions. Among this selection of volumes, companies that filed suits against the National Labor Relations Board include Union Drawn Steel, Republic Steel Corporation, Southern Steamship Company, and Berkshire Knitting Mills. While most of the volumes contain published reports, a few contain original papers and photographs that pertain to specific cases. For example, Volume 36 consists entirely of copies of petitions, orders, memoranda, other legal documents, and photographs from the trial of *Genzo Shimadzu and Northeast Engineering Corporation v. Electric Storage and Battery Co.* (1937-1938).

Rounding out the collection are three miscellaneous volumes. Volume 61 is a copy of *American Maritime Cases* (1932). Joseph W. Henderson served as an associate editor of this work. Volumes 62 and 63 are published reports from cases brought before the United States Court of Appeals and on which Joseph W. Henderson served. Both cases involved Eastern Air Lines, Inc. and two separate plane accidents: one involving a plane that was struck by a Bolivian military craft on 1 November 1949; the other the crash of Flight 642 on 21 December 1955.

Discarded from the collection were 297 law books and other unrelated volumes that did not provide direct documentation of the work of Rawle & Henderson. A list of these volumes can be found in the appendix starting on page 10 of this guide.

Separation report

None.

Related materials

At HSP:

Rawle family papers (Collection 536)

Bibliography

Much of the background information on the firm was culled from Rawle & Henderson's current website: www.rawle.com.

Subjects

Law – Pennsylvania – History
Law – Pennsylvania – Philadelphia
Law firms – Pennsylvania – Philadelphia – 19th Century
Law firms – Pennsylvania – Philadelphia – 20th Century
Lawyers – Pennsylvania – Philadelphia – 19th Century
Lawyers – Pennsylvania – Philadelphia – 20th Century
Legal documents – Interpretation and construction – Pennsylvania
Legal documents – United States
United States. National Labor Relations Board – Cases

Henderson, Joseph W., ca. 1890-1957

Rawle, Francis, 1846-1930

Rawle, William, 1759-1836

Rawle, William, 1788-1858

Rawle, William Brooke, 1843-1915

Rawle, William Henry, 1823-1889

Rawle & Henderson

Administrative Information

Restrictions

The collection is open for research.

Acquisition information

Gift of Rawle & Henderson, 2008.

Accession number 2008.025

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Cite as: [Indicate cited item or series here], Rawle & Henderson collection (Collection 3109), The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Processing note

Processing made possible by a generous donation from Howard Lewis.

Volume listing

“Laws of Pennsylvania”

Laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, from the fourteenth day of October, One Thousand Seven Hundred, to the sixth day of April, One Thousand Eight Hundred and Two, Republished, under the authority of the legislature by M. Carey and J. Bioren.

Laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, from the seventh day of December, One Thousand Eight Hundred and Two, to the fourth day of April, One Thousand Eight Hundred and Five, Republished, under the authority of the legislature by John Bioren.

Title	Date published	Volume numbers
Four (4) volumes total. For years 1700-1802, there are three books, volumes 4, 5, 6, which cover laws from 1791 to 1802. For years 1802-1805, there is one book, volume 7, which covers laws from 1803 to 1805	1803, 1806	1-4

“Sergeant and Rawle’s Reports”

Reports of cases adjudged in the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania by Thomas Sergeant and Wm. Rawle, Jun.

Description	Dates published	Volume numbers
Seventeen (17) volumes; reports cover cases from 1814 to 1828	1820, 1823, 1829, 1841, 1845-1847	5-21

“Rawle’s Reports”

Reports of cases adjudged in the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania by William Rawle, Jun.

Description	Dates published	Volume numbers
Five (5) volumes; reports cover cases from 1828 to 1835	1829-1836	22-26

“Paper Books”

Title	Dates published	Extent	Volume numbers
<i>Eli Lilly and Co. v. Wm. R. Warner and Co.</i>	1921	2 vols.	27-28
<i>S. S. Willdomino v. Citro Chemical and Charles Pfizer and Co. Inc.</i>	1923	1 vol.	29
<i>S. S. Margaret v. S. S. Manchester Merchant</i>	1927	2 vols.	30-31
<i>Genzo Shimadzu and Northeast Engineering Corporation v. Electric Storage and Battery Co. [and vice versa]</i>	1937-1938	6 vols.	32-37
<i>Fruit Industries, Ltd. v. Bisceglia Brothers Corporation</i>	1938	1 vol.	38
<i>Minersville School District v. Walter Gobitis</i> <i>Frederick J. Ottinger v. Ritner K. Walling</i> <i>Mary F. Sullivan v. Harry Brockhurst and James J. Diamond</i> <i>The Griffiths Laboratories v. Gleason Products, Stanley F. Gleason, and F. M. Risser</i>	1938	1 vol.	39
<i>National Labor Relations Board v. Swank Products, Inc.</i>	1939	2 vols.	40-41
<i>Union Drawn Steel and Republic Steel v. National Labor Relations Board</i>	1939	2 vols.	42-43
<i>Republic Steel Corporation v. National Labor Relations Board</i>	1939-1940	7 vols.	44-50
<i>Berkshire Knitting Mills v. National Labor Relations Board</i>	1940	2 vols.	51-52
<i>Charles J. Beck v. Wings Field</i> <i>David E. Jones v. Waterman Steamship Corporation</i> <i>Anton Mahnich v. Southern Steamship Co.</i> <i>National Labor Relations Board v. Republic Steel Corporation</i>	1940	1 vol.	53
<i>Southern Steamship Company v. National Labor Relations Board</i>	1941	3 vols.	54-56
<i>Lawrence M. Hunter v. Lee T. Hunter</i>	1951	2 vols.	57-58

<i>Clifford E. Garner T/A The Gap Co. v. Zoning Board of Adjustment of Philadelphia</i>	1956	1 vol.	59
<i>Reading Co. v. Pope and Talbot, Inc., and Merrett, Chapman & Scott Corporation</i>	1957	1 vol.	60

Other volumes

Title	Dates published	Extent	Volume numbers
<i>American Maritime Cases</i> , edited by Emory H. Niles and Arnold W. Knauth	1932	1 vol.	61
<i>United States Court of Appeals, nos. 11991 and 11992: Eastern Air Lines, Inc. v. Union Trust Company</i>	ca. 1956	1 booklet	62
<i>United States Court of Appeals, no. 14060: Marion J. Berguido, et al. v. Eastern Air Lines, Inc.</i>	ca. 1962	1 vol.	63

Appendix: Volumes discarded from the collection

NOTE: The following volumes were discarded from the collection because they did not significantly or directly document the work of the law firm Rawle & Henderson. Nearly all of these volumes are general state and local law books and published reports that can be found in libraries at Temple University, Drexel University, the University of Pennsylvania, as well as the Free Library of Philadelphia.

Laws of the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 1834-1970
[1834-1846; 1848-1862; 1864; 1867; 1874-1879; biannually for most years between 1881 and 1970 (there are duplicate sets of volumes for the years 1963, 1965, and 1966, as well as *Acts & Vetoes, 1933-1934.*)] **(101 volumes)**

Encyclopedia Britannica, 1972 edition, full edit + index **(24 volumes)**

Britannica yearbook, 1972 **(1 volume)**

Britannica yearbook, 1973 **(1 volume)**

Bench and Bar of Pennsylvania, 1940-1941 by C. W. Taylor Jr. **(1 volume)**

Eminent Judges and Lawyers of the American Bar, 1951 **(1 volume)**

Fuentes de la Constitucion Argentina, 1943 by Carlos S. Fayt **(1 volume)**

History of the American Bar Association, 1953 by Sunderland **(1 volume)**

ABA London meeting, 1924 **(1 volume)**

Reports of Cases in the County Courts of the Fifth Circuit and in the High Court of Errors and Appeals of the State of Pennsylvania, by Alexander Addison, 1800. **(2 volumes)**

Reports of cases adjudged in the Supreme court of Pennsylvania; with some selected cases at nisi prius, and in the circuit courts, by Jasper Yeates, 1817-1819. **(4 volumes)**

Reports of Cases Adjudged in the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, by Horace Binney, 1810-1813, 1823, 1844. **(6 volumes)**

Reports of Cases Adjudged in the Court of Common Pleas of the First Judicial District of Pennsylvania, by Peter A. Browne, 1811-1812. **(2 volumes)**

Reports of Cases Adjudged in the Court of Common Pleas, Quarter Sessions, Oyer and Terminer, and Orphans' Court of the First Judicial District of Pennsylvania, by John W. Ashmead, 1831-1841. **(2 volumes)**

Reports of cases adjudged in the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania by William Rawle, Jun., Charles B. Penrose, and Frederick Watts, 1833-1843. **(3 volumes)**

Reports of cases argued and determined in the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania by Frederick Watts, 1834-1841. **(10 volumes)**

Reports of cases adjudged in the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, in the Eastern District, by Thomas I. Wharton, 1870. **(6 volumes)**

Reports of cases determined in the district court for the City and County of Philadelphia by John Miles, 1836, 1842. **(2 volumes)**

Reports of Cases adjudged in the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania by Frederick Watts and Henry J. Sergeant, 1842-1846. **(9 volumes)**

Pennsylvania State reports containing cases adjudged in the Supreme Court by Robert M. Barr (9 vols.) and J. Pringle Jones (1 vol.), 1846-1850. **(10 volumes)**

Reports of cases argued and adjudged in the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania by Benjamin Grant, 1859-1860. **(2 volumes)**

Philadelphia Reports: or, Legal Intelligencer Condensed, ca. 1863-1893. **(20 volumes)**

Reports of Equity, Election, and other Important Cases argued and Determined principally in the Courts of the County of Philadelphia, by F. Carroll Brewster, 1869-1873. **(4 volumes)**

Cadwalader's Cases being decisions of the Hon. John Cadwalader, Judge of the District Court of the United States for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, between the years 1858 and 1879, comprising some ruling opinions on questions of prize and belligerency arising during the Civil War, together with decisions in admiralty, in equity and at common law., 1907. **(2 volumes)**

Pennsylvania County Court Reports containing Cases Decided in the Courts of Several Counties of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 1886-1921. **(50 volumes)**

The District Reports, containing Cases Decided in the Various Judicial Districts of the State of Pennsylvania, 1892-1921 **(30 volumes)**

Probate Cases being Cases heard and decided by the Register of Wills for the County of Philadelphia, 1901-1904. **(1 volume)**

TOTAL: 297 volumes