



Collection V86

Thomas H. Shoemaker
Germantown and Philadelphia portraits and views
collection

1863-1922 (bulk ca. 1910-ca. 1915)
33 boxes, 4 volumes, 9 lin. feet

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Restrictions: None

Related Collections at John Richard "Old Landmarks in Germantown
HSP: and Vicinity" (Call numbers Bd 84 R 381 and
Bd 84 R 381.1)

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Abstract

Thomas H. Shoemaker (1851-1936) was a resident of Germantown and author of “The Inhabitants of Germantown of Chestnut Hill in 1809,” which was published in volumes fifteen and sixteen of the *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*. He was an informal Germantown historian and recognized, in the late 1880s, that his hometown’s landscape was changing. Many of the local old colonial homes were being torn down in favor of shops and row houses, and Shoemaker wished to somehow document the disappearing buildings. In 1888, Shoemaker met artist John Richard, who had already begun making pen and ink drawings of many old Germantown houses. Shoemaker took to opportunity to work with Richard and began collecting his works. Unfortunately, Richard died several months after their first meeting, and Shoemaker decided to carry on the documentation process using photography.

The Thomas H. Shoemaker Germantown and Philadelphia prints and views collection consists of over twelve thousand images of historical places and colonial houses (many of which no longer exist) in and around the Germantown, Chestnut Hill, and Mount Airy sections of Philadelphia. In addition to exterior shots of houses, there are also images of doorways and some house interiors. There are also photographs of views along the Wissahickon Creek; images of graveyards, meeting houses, and churches; various portraits, and pictures of historic houses in other states, such as South Carolina and Massachusetts. While the collection contains mostly photographs, there are also lithographs, india ink drawings, prints, engravings, and silhouettes.

Most of the photographs in the collection date from between 1889 to 1915; however, those by Shoemaker date from about 1910 to 1915. The earliest item is a pen and ink by Richard dated 1863; the latest item is a photograph (with Shoemaker in it) dated 1922. All of the photographs were mounted onto heavy cardstock and the majorities of them are labeled with typed captions. Shoemaker also included his own “sketches” for many of the photos, which primarily consist of clippings and handwritten notes, descriptions, and anecdotes. Shoemaker’s extensive knowledge of Germantown is evident in most “sketches,” as are his connections to local residents from whom he garnered much of his information. In particular, the portraits often contain genealogical information concerning each person, including family trees, occupations, wives, and children. While his sketches are in-depth, he assumed much about the reader’s knowledge of Germantown, and often did not describe the locations of specific houses or the relationships between unrelated people.

Related collections

At HSP:

John Richard “Old Landmarks in Germantown and Vicinity” (Call numbers Bd 84 R 381 and Bd 84 R 381.1)

Restrictions

The collection is open for research.

Acquisition information

Gift of Mary W. Shoemaker, ca. 1939.

Preferred citation

Cite as: [Indicate cited item or series here], Thomas H. Shoemaker Germantown and Philadelphia portraits and views collection (Collection V86), The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Box and folder listing

Please note that the boxes have been consecutively re-numbered in the order they were found and still retain the old folio numbers.

New box or volume number	Folio number	Brief description
Box 1	1	Germantown portraits
Box 2	2	Germantown portraits
Box 3	3	Wissahickon Views (Cresheim Creek & Wissahickon)
Box 4	3B	Wissahickon Views (Wissahickon Creek)
Box 5	4	Wissahickon Views (Paper Mill Run)
Box 6	4B	Wissahickon Views (Sandy Run)
Box 7	5	Wissahickon Views (Oil Mill Run, Monoshone Creek or Paper Mill Run)
Box 8	6	Wissahickon Views
Box 9	7	Germantown Houses (W-Z)
Box 10	8	Germantown Houses (W)
Box 11	9	Germantown Houses (A-C)
Box 12	10	Germantown Houses (H-L)
Box 13	11	Houses of Mount Airy and Chestnut Hill
Box 14	12	Germantown Houses (M)
Box 15	13	Houses of Mount Airy and Chestnut Hill
Box 16	14	Germantown Houses (D-G)
Box 17	15	Germantown Houses (S-V)
Box 18	16	Germantown doorways
Box 19	17	Germantown doorways
Box 20	18	Germantown doorways
Box 21	19	Miscellaneous
Box 22	20	Colonial Houses in Charleston, S.C. Salem, Mass. (plus some buildings in N.H.)
Box 23	21	Meeting Houses, Churches, and Grave Yards in and around Philadelphia
Box 24	22	Meeting Houses, Churches, and Grave Yards in and around Philadelphia
Box 25	23	Germantown Houses (N-R)
Box 26	24	Miscellaneous
Box 27	25	Wissahickon Views
Box 28	26	Germantown Portraits (G-M)
Box 29	28	Colonial Doorways in Philadelphia
Box 30	29	Colonial Doorways in Philadelphia
Box 31	30	Colonial Doorways and Interiors in Philadelphia
Box 32	31	Colonial Houses in and around Philadelphia

Box 33	32	Interiors of Colonial Houses of Germantown
Vol. 1	n/a	Scrapbook, ca. 1884-ca. 1916: "Items of General Interest"
Vol. 2	n/a	Scrapbook, ca. 1888: "Wealthy Citizens of Philadelphia"
Vol. 3	n/a	Scrapbook, ca. 1893-ca. 1914: "Historical Clippings"
Vol. 4	n/a	Scrapbook, ca. 1897-ca. 1922: "Germantown and other subjects" [Volume contains loose papers]