HSP’s collections center on eastern Pennsylvania, southern New Jersey, and parts of Delaware and Maryland, but also include a wealth of materials on the eastern United States, the founding of this country, and the diversity of ethnic and immigrant experiences across the United States.

Areas of particular strength include the following (click on a heading for more information about our holdings relevant to that topic.)

**Subject Guides**

**20th-Century Collections**

The depth and breadth of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania’s 20th-century collections is significant. These rich collections, dating up through the late 20th century, have both a regional and national scope. They document the greater Philadelphia area, national figures and organizations, as well as individuals and associations that had a nationwide impact. The experiences of diverse segments of society, including African Americans, women, and various ethnic and immigrant groups, are well represented.

**African American Collections**

HSP’s collections document the experiences and representations of African Americans from the colonial era to the present. This guide provides an overview of these resources, including manuscripts, books, pamphlets, serials, prints, broadsides, other graphics, and microfilm.

**Architectural Resources**
The collections of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania document Philadelphia’s rich residential and commercial architectural history from the colonial period through the 20th century with sources as diverse as original architects’ drawings to real estate development brochures.

Arts and Culture

HSP's collections in Arts and Culture include works of art on paper, playbills and scrapbooks related to the performing arts, literary manuscripts, sheet music and music books, records of cultural institutions, and the personal papers of visual and performing artists.

Business History

HSP's extensive business-related holdings document three centuries of business activity, primarily in Pennsylvania and the Philadelphia region. In addition to the manuscript collections outlined below, the Society also has many business-related publications, including company and government reports, circulars, catalogs, guides, timetables, and legal records.

Chinese Genealogy Resources

The Historical Society of Pennsylvania's collections include a variety of resources on the
experiences of Chinese immigrants in Philadelphia and beyond. Resources include published materials, manuscript collections, newspapers and other periodicals, photographs, and other graphics.

Civil War Manuscripts & Newspapers

by Daniel N. Rolph, Ph.D., Head of Reference Services
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Civil War collections at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania are excellent primary resources that offer eyewitness accounts and reveal the fears, prejudices, and heroism of the individual soldier, as well as the deprivation and destruction of civilian life, in America's most devastating conflict to date.

Civil War Resources

Community and Social Service History

HSP's collections include a broad range of materials representing philanthropic, service, self-help, and mutual benefit initiatives. From churches to ethnic associations to community service organizations to individual philanthropists, these collections offer unique resources for research.

Ethnic History Resources
Even before the merger with the Balch Institute, HSP had significant holdings related to ethnic and immigrant history, particularly regarding African Americans, Germans, and Native Americans in Pennsylvania. These materials are now joined with those of the Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies, which set out to document all ethnic groups in the United States. There is also substantial documentation on the history of American nativism and ethnic stereotyping.

Family History & Genealogy

The Historical Society of Pennsylvania is one of the most complete and professional genealogy centers in the nation—and the largest in the Mid-Atlantic region. HSP collects genealogical materials from Pennsylvania and every other state east of the Mississippi River. Its collections also cover pre-migration from Europe, the genealogical “stepping stones” across the Caribbean, and out-migration to Canada.

Federal Census Records

Financial Records Guide and Glossary

The financial records of a business can hold a wealth of information. With business records, a researcher can obtain much information, whether he or she is interested in nineteenth century purchasing patterns, the cost of materials used in textile manufacturing, or the everyday
operations of a brewery. The main types of financial materials found among business records are account books, account statements, receipts, bills and shipping information. Correspondence, legal cases and minute books also offer more insight into the operations of a business.

Founding of Pennsylvania and the United States

The Society offers outstanding holdings on the formation of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania as well as the creation of the American republic, including the papers of William Penn, Benjamin Franklin, Continental Congress President Henry Laurens, and many more, as well as drafts of the U.S. Constitution and other treasures.

German American Genealogy Resources

The Historical Society of Pennsylvania's collections include a large number of resources that relate to German-speaking immigrants in Philadelphia and beyond, dating from the earliest colonists into the twentieth century. Resources include published materials, manuscript collections, newspapers and other periodicals, photographs, and other graphics.

Glossary of Terms Commonly Found in Family Papers [1]

This glossary defines types of documents frequently found in collections of family papers.

Hispanic / Latino Collections [2]
HSP holds a variety of collections rich in documenting the experiences of Hispanic / Latino immigrants in the United States. The following guide provides a list of manuscript and photograph collections pertaining to Hispanic groups in the Philadelphia metropolitan area.

**Jewish Resources** [3]

A guide to Philadelphia Jewish resources at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, including resources on genealogy, synagogues, and cemeteries. Resources include materials from published materials, manuscript materials, and graphics.


This bibliographic guide contains materials from the Historical Society of Pennsylvania’s published materials, manuscript collections, images, and maps relating to the Kensington neighborhood of Philadelphia.

**Land Records Guide** [5]

The manuscripts within the collections of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania document the
acquisition and inheritance of lands by Pennsylvania families from the 17th to the 20th century. Generally grouped together in the category “land records,” these collections provide insight into early land laws, genealogy, and may provide early descriptions of the Pennsylvania landscape.

Military Records, Military History, and Wars [6]

For more than 350 years, millions of Americans have been involved in military service, both at home and abroad. Consequently, military records are one of the most fruitful resources for biographical and genealogical research.

Philadelphia and Pennsylvania Resources [7]

The Historical Society of Pennsylvania has extensive holdings on the history of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania, including hundreds of useful handbooks, guides, and histories. In addition to the published holdings listed here, researchers can delve deeply into manuscript collections that shed light on the area’s history.

Philadelphia City Directories [8]

Philadelphia city directories are an excellent source for locating information on the city’s residents, businesses, and city-wide development. In HSP’s library is a complete run of city directories beginning in the late 18th-century and running consistently through 1935. This guide contains information on the directories, as well as other published resources on Philadelphia’s development.

Philadelphia Neighborhood History [9]
Philadelphia has more than 100 separate neighborhoods, each with its own historical memories. Among HSP's collections are many materials that document the rich histories of Philadelphia’s communities. This guide serves as an overview of the types of records we have pertaining to neighborhood history.

Politics and Government

This guide will help you navigate HSP's holdings related to federal, state, and local officials, and government publications from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the City of Philadelphia. Other HSP collections relate to Philadelphia political history; the political debate over slavery, suffrage and women's rights; labor movements; and political advocacy and reform movements.

Vital Records

The Historical Society of Pennsylvania maintains a significant collection of resources necessary to identify and validate Pennsylvania and other states' vital records from the 18th to mid-19th centuries. This guide contains an overview of such records, including cemetery, church, baptismal and Bible records, family histories, and newspaper announcements.

Women during the Civil War
HSP's collections provide an exceptional source of women’s writings during the Civil War years. The following guide provides an annotated resource for these records, which include diaries, correspondence, and account books kept by women and women’s organizations prior to, during, and after the war.

**Women's History Resources**

The collections of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania contain a wealth of documentary evidence of women’s historical experience from the earliest colonial settlements through the twentieth century. This guide serves as a brief discussion of the diversity of sources available at HSP, including manuscripts, published material, and images.

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**Links**

[3] https://hsp.org/collections/catalogs-research-tools/subject-guides/jewish-resources
[12] https://hsp.org/collections/catalogs-research-tools/subject-guides/women-during-the-civil-war