



The Historical
Society of
Pennsylvania

Collection 1939

Chambers family
Papers

ca. 1703-1963, 2008 (bulk 1842-1926)
8 boxes, 4 volumes, 3 flat files, 3.6 lin. feet

Contact: The Historical Society of Pennsylvania
1300 Locust Street, Philadelphia, PA 19107
Phone: (215) 732-6200 FAX: (215) 732-2680
<http://www.hsp.org>

Processed by: Cary Majewicz
Processing Completed: May 2008

Sponsor: Processing made possible by a generous
donation from Barbe Ballard Breylinger.

Restrictions: None

**Related Collections at
HSP:** None

Chambers family
Papers, ca. 1703-1963, 2008 (bulk 1842-1926)
8 boxes, 4 volumes, 3 flat files, 3.6 lin. feet

Collection 1939

Abstract

The Chambers family of New Castle County, Delaware, and Chester County, Pennsylvania, descended from John Chambers of Yorkshire, England. They settled as farmers on “Hopyard,” a sizeable farm that encompassed land in lower southern Chester County to the upper branch of the White Clay Creek in Delaware. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, several family members moved to West Grove, Pennsylvania, where three brothers formed a business distributing, among other things, grain, wool, lumber, and coal.

This collection presents the history of a family that was among the early settlers of southern Pennsylvania and northern Delaware. The collection spans from the 1700s to the mid 1900s, and contains material, such as correspondence and bills, that documents the daily lives and ventures of individuals from several generations. There are also assorted estate and legal papers, such as deeds, indentures, wills, warrants, and bonds; photographs; ephemera; travel notes; and several volumes, such as daybooks and ciphering books.

Background note

The Chambers were a family of farmers and merchants who originated from John Chambers (1662-1730), a member of the Society of Friends from Yorkshire, England. He, along with his second wife and five children, came to Philadelphia in the early 1700s and settled on a 664-acre farm called Hopyard sometime around 1720. The farm, which was utilized at the time for food and grain crops, spanned from northwestern Delaware to southeastern Pennsylvania and remained in the family for several generations. Over time, its acreage diminished as the land was sold or divided among family members. In the 1850s, a portion of the land called Hilltop became the site of the family home by the same name. By the late 1870s, the remaining farm totaled about 168 acres; but by the 1920s, since several adjoining farms had been inherited or bought, the farm’s size had increased to just over 500 acres. This land was kept within the family and turned it into a profitable dairy farm named Chambers Rocks Farm.

While the family grew, the bulk of its members remained on Hopyard; however, a few descendants moved to northern Maryland or Philadelphia. Some early family members, including John Chambers's grandsons, John, Benjamin, and Samuel, joined the Delaware militia during the Revolutionary War. Notably, John and Benjamin attended school with Charles Thomson, the future secretary of the Continental Congress. John Chambers's great-grandson, John W. Chambers (1816-ca. 1868) built the Hilltop house in 1851 where both he and his wife, Mary Jane [Kemble] Chambers (1818-1906) lived for the rest of their lives.

Samuel Kemble Chambers, John W. and Mary's second son, was among those who moved off the family farm. After he graduated from Westtown School, a Quaker preparatory and boarding school, in 1861, he moved first to New Garden, Pennsylvania, and then to nearby West Grove. He enlisted in the army in 1864 and was mustered in July of that same year. He served with the 197th Regiment of Pennsylvania Volunteers. After one hundred days of service, he was formally discharged, and he returned to West Grove. Soon after, he and his brothers John J. and George R. Chambers formed Chambers Bros, distributors of wool, grain, and lumber. The name was eventually changed to S.K. Chambers & Bros., and the distribution list grew to include items such as salt, seed, and fertilizer. Samuel also achieved prominence when he founded the National Bank of West Grove, where he served as president for twenty-one years. He also established, in 1855, West Grove's Presbyterian Church. After Samuel's death, his brother John J. Chambers maintained the family store, which he managed until his own death in 1926.

In 1877, Samuel married Rebecca Lavinia Ballard (1858-1920), who had attended Putnam Female Seminary in Ohio, the same state in which she was born. While she was a strong mother to their two daughters, Mary and Helen, Rebecca was also a strong leader and served as secretary and, for a year, president of the Pennsylvania chapter of the Women's Christian Temperance Union. She was also a member of West Grove Presbyterian Church, the Independent Order of Good Templars, and the Daughters of the American Revolution.

Samuel and Rebecca's oldest daughter, Mary Ballard Chambers, inherited the family farm in 1920. Mary married Phillip Donald Folwell in 1904, and they turned the land into a profitable dairy farm that they named Chambers Rocks Farm. The farm was managed by hired farmers, several of whom raised prize-winning cattle which were sometimes shown at Harrington, Delaware's farm show. Meanwhile, the Folwells, resided in Philadelphia with their family of two sons and four daughters. They remained in the city until 1927 when they moved to Merion, Pennsylvania. A few years after her husband's death in 1955, Mary moved to an apartment complex in Merion called Merion Manor. By the early 1960s, she had moved back to Philadelphia.

Scope & content

The Chambers family papers are a modest collection of correspondence, estate and legal papers, financial material, photographs, diaries and other volumes, and ephemera. Overall, the collection spans about two hundred and sixty years, but the bulk of the

material dates from the 1840s to the 1920s. While the collection is probably most useful to family descendants doing genealogical research, it also contains useful land deeds that trace several early land transactions in Pennsylvania and Delaware. Additionally, the correspondence and financial material documents the daily lives and ventures of an early Quaker family that settled in southeastern Pennsylvania and northwestern Delaware. A brief genealogical report on the descendants of Richard Chambers (1775-1863) is available as an appendix on page 12.

This medium-sized collection has been arranged into four series. The first series (*Correspondence*) contains mostly mixed family letters that are arranged by date. One folder, however, contains a distinct group of letters that Samuel received from friends and family while he served in the army in 1864. The second series (*Estate and legal*) contains land deeds and indentures that are among the earliest material in the collection. In this series, there is also an assortment of other legal papers, wills, and related correspondence. The third series (*Financial*) primarily consists of certain family members' collections of household bills and receipts. There are also several volumes including three daybooks and a receipt book. The fourth and final series (*Miscellaneous*) contains a range of volumes, from early ciphering books to travel and personal diaries to address books. It also contains a folder of family photographs, ephemera such as calling cards and membership cards, an "Official Map of Pennsylvania" published around 1920, and a scrapbook made by Mary Chambers Folwell.

Overview of arrangement

Series I	Correspondence, 1768-1957, n.d.	10 folders
Series II	Estate and legal, ca. 1703-1946, n.d.	20 folders, 2 flat files
Series III	Financial, 1765-1956, n.d.	13 folders, 2 volumes
Series IV	Miscellaneous, 1792-1963, 2008, n.d.	32 folders, 2 volumes, 1 flat file

Series descriptions

Series 1. Correspondence, 1768-1957, n.d. (Boxes 1-2)

This small series of ten folders contains an array of family letters that chiefly discuss family and personal events, business ventures, personal health and affairs, and travels. Only occasionally did a writer touch upon current events and subjects, such as military preparedness, the abolition of slavery, and economic downturns. For example, in a letter from David M. Chambers to John W. Chambers dated December 16, 1838, David briefly discusses the two kinds of abolitionists with which he has become familiar: "the abstaining [sic] and the non abstaining [sic]." The difference, he wrote, is "the former consider it their duty to refrain from eating all kinds of slave produce[,] which the latter do not." Another example is a letter dated March 3, 1874, from Samuel K. Chambers to his mother Mary Jane Chambers. "The Temperance movement, is all the rage here now," wrote Samuel, who was then in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, on business, "although this town voted against [the]

Local option, there is a good deal of whiskey [sic] drank.” He then mentioned that several prayer services were held around Williamsport in support.

Other than general family letters, researchers will find other groups of notable correspondence, including letters written to Samuel K. Chambers while he served in the army from July to November 1864. There are also a few scattered letters from Rebecca L. Ballard from around the time (ca. 1875-1876) she attended Putnam Female Seminary in Ohio. There are also later letters from Rebecca to various family members written on Women’s Christian Temperance Union of Pennsylvania letterhead, in which she is listed as president. Finally, in Box 1 Folder 7, there are descriptive letters from Mary B. Chambers to her family while she was at Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts, from 1900 to 1904.

Series 2. Estate and legal, ca. 1703-1946, n.d. (Boxes 2-3, Flat files 1-2)

This series contains an assortment of wills, inventories, and legal documents from and correspondence about many of the Chambers family estates, including those of early ancestors John (1662-1730) and Richard (1700-1774). There are also several folders of unsorted legal papers including bonds, warrants, indentures, agreements, and settlements.

The earliest item in this series appears to be a warrant involving John Richardson and Joseph Clayton, which was then given to John Chambers (1662-1730) by Richardson. The warrant mentions lands situate to the White Clay Creek in New Castle County, Delaware, which is presumably why it fell into Chambers’s hands. There are also copies of three early legal documents, the first of which is a 1684 land patent from William Penn to John Ogle. It contains the earliest mention of the land called Hopyard, of which Ogle was the first owner. The second document is a copy of the 1720 indenture between David Lloyd, presumably the second owner of Hopyard farm, and John Chambers. At this point, when Chambers became the owner of the farm, it totaled 664 acres. The last document is a 1725 indenture recording the receipt by Richard Chambers, John Chambers’s son, of 130 acres of the Hopyard farm.

This series also contains stock certificates, miscellaneous papers of Rebecca B. Chambers, land deeds and surveys, and lone wills of various family members.

Series 3. Financial, 1765-1956, n.d. (Box 4, Vols. 1-2)

The bulk of this small series is made up of personal and household receipts from several family members, including John Chambers (1730-1807), Richard Chambers (1775-1863), and Mary Jane [Kemble] Chambers. In particular, there is a folder of invoices from S.K. Chambers & Bros. to Mary J. Chambers, which document her accounts with the company at least two decades after her husband’s death. There is also an account book from Sarah Black Chambers (1811-1897), the eldest daughter of Richard Chambers (1775-1863). While it contains what appear to be cash records, it also contains a diary-like entry dictated to an unidentified writer by Sarah in 1895 in which she discussed her health and family.

The folder of financial material from the Folwell family (Box 4 Folder 7) contains several notable documents relating to their dairy farm, Chambers Rocks Farm, including insurance papers, cattle transfer certificates, and the farm's articles of incorporation. There are also several later papers from Mary C. Folwell, including insurance papers and her 1956 Merion Manor apartment lease.

There are also five volumes in this series: Richard Chambers wastebank/journal/ledger, two John Chambers (b. 1780) daybooks, an unidentified daybook, and unidentified receipt book.

Series 4. Miscellaneous, 1792-1963, 2008, n.d. (Boxes 4-8, Vols. 3-4, Flat file 3)

This varied series contains images and photographs, ephemera, travel notes, a circa 1920 map of Pennsylvania, ciphering books dating from 1792 to 1794, and personal volumes from Rebecca B. Chambers, John J. Chambers, and Mary Chambers Folwell.

Most of the volumes are foldered and contained in the last four boxes of the collection. Those of Rebecca B. Chambers include her 1875-1876 notebook from Putnam Seminary and her European travel diaries of 1895 and 1900. Box 5 Folder 2 contains two appointment books/diaries of John J. Chambers dated 1882 and 1887. It also contains his "Christian Year Birthday Book" also of 1887 in which he recorded the births and death of family members and ancestors. Additionally, there are two of his appointment books/diaries from 1927 and 1928; the latter contains his own entries up to mid-August, just a couple weeks before his death. Another family member later recorded that he died in late August.

Most of the volumes are from Mary Chambers Folwell. There are eight personal diaries and one autograph book that date from before her marriage, 1896 to 1904. Her pre-1900 diaries contain interesting anecdotes about her family and life in high school. Those of 1900 to 1904 contain her personal accounts of life at Smith College. Her daily entries are interesting but broad as she recalled exams, school events, students and teachers, social events, and field trips. After her marriage, Mary continued to take scrupulous notes about her daily life and events, such as her travels and her family's move from Philadelphia to the nearby suburb of Merion. In addition, she created an inspirational scrapbook and recorded extracts from a 1918 diary of Rebecca B. Chambers. These later volumes, which date primarily from the 1930s to the 1960s, are contained in Boxes 6 to 8.

Please note that the four ciphering books from the collection have been cleaned for mold.

Separation report

None.

Reference resources

HSP's library contains the following resources on the Chambers family of New Castle County, Delaware and Chester County, Pennsylvania [call numbers are in brackets]:

Chambers family in America with allied line of Kemble. [Gen Ch3]

Chambers/Folwell family notes, compiled by Barbe Breylinger [FNC CS 71 .C44393 2005 and FNC CS 71 .c44393 2005 pt. 2]

Original wedding invitations, funeral notices and letters relating to the Chambers, Kemble (Kimbel) and other families in Delaware (ca. 1870-1923). [Doc. Box 44]

Miscellaneous items pertaining to the Chambers family of West Grove, Pa; B. Hoff Knight collection. [FC Ch]

Descendants of John Chambers and Deborah Dobson of County York, England and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania : includes the allied family of Kemble and Hossinger; L. Gertrude Fryburg collection. [FC Ch]

Subjects

Chester County (Pa.) – History
Chester County (Pa.) – Social life and customs
Dairy farmers – Pennsylvania – Chester County
Dairy farming – Pennsylvania – Chester County
Dairy farming – Employment – Pennsylvania – Chester County
Lumber trade – Pennsylvania
White Clay Creek (Pa. and Del.)

Chambers, John, 1780-1856
Chambers, John J., 1848-1928
Chambers, Mary Jane Kimble, 1818-1906
Chambers, Rebecca Ballard, 1858-1920
Chambers, Richard, 1775-1863
Chambers, Samuel Kimble, 1845-1917
Folwell, Mary Ballard Chambers, b. 1881

Pennsylvania Woman's Christian Temperance Union
Putnam Female Seminary
Smith College

Administrative Information

Restrictions

The collection is open for research.

Acquisition information

Gift of Nathan Folwell and members of the Chambers family, 1967.

Preferred citation

Cite as: [Indicate cited item or series here], Chambers family papers (Collection 1939),
The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Processing note

Processing made possible by a generous donation from Barbe Ballard Breylinger.

The ciphering books in Series 4 have been cleaned for mold

Box and folder listing

Series 1. Correspondence

Folder title	Date	Box/ Vol.	Folder
Mixed family letters	1768, 1804, 1834, 1837-1839, 1842-1869	1	1-2
Samuel K. Chambers general correspondence and Civil War letters	1861-1864, n.d.	1	3
Mixed family letters	1870-1904	1	4-7
Mixed family letters	1905-1909, 1912- 1957	2	1-2
Mixed family letters	n.d.	2	3

Series 2. Estate and legal

Folder title	Date	Box/ Vol.	Folder
John Chambers (1662-1730) land deed	ca. 1703	n/a	FF 1
Richard Chambers (1700-1774) will and estate	1725, 1734, 1747, 1773, 1774	2	4
Bonds, warrants, indentures, and agreements	1730-1926	2	5-6
John Chambers (1730-1807) estate	1777-1786, 1807, 1809, n.d.	2	7
Land deeds, survey, and related records	1816-1927, n.d.	2	8
John J. Chambers estate papers	1810, 1824, 1884, 1907-ca. 1942, n.d.	2	9
John J. Chambers wills	1885-1928	2	10
Richard Chambers (1775-1863) will and estate	1823-1825, 1833- 1834, 1844, 1851, 1863	3	1
Settlements and inventories	1829, 1859, 1897- 1935, n.d.	3	2
Wills of other family members and related notes	1841, 1855, 1894, 1897, n.d.	3	3
John W. Chambers will and estate	1864-1869	3	4

Samuel K. Chambers estate and pension papers	1864-1929 (bulk 1907-1917)	3	5
Charles Chambers estate	1873, 1874, 1875, 1925	3	6
Charles Chambers estate book	1924	3	7
Rebecca B. Chambers miscellaneous papers	1873-1875, 1884, 1888, 1902, 1920	3	8
“Public Sale” posters [Mary Jane Chambers, proprietor]	1877	n/a	FF 2
Mary Jane [Kemble] Chambers wills and insurance certificate	1888, 1901, 1906	3	9
Stocks – certificates and correspondence	1888-1935	3	10
David M. Chambers wills and background note	1903, n.d.	3	11
Copies of indentures dated 1684, 1720, and 1729	n.d.	3	12
Miscellaneous	1809-1946, n.d.	3	13

Series 3. Financial

Folder title	Date	Box/ Vol.	Folder
John Chambers (1730-1807) bills and receipts	1765-1809, n.d.	4	1
Richard Chambers wastebook/journal/ledger	1796	4	2
John Chambers (?) daybook	1800-1808	4	3
Unidentified daybook	1804	4	4
John Chambers (b. 1780) bills and receipts	1807-1850, n.d.	4	5
Unidentified receipt book	1811-1824	Vol. 1	n/a
John Chambers (b. 1780) daybook	1826-1854	Vol. 2	n/a
John W. Chambers bills and receipts	1844-1868	4	6
John W. Chambers “vendue list”	1865	4	7
Richard Chambers (1775-1863) bills and receipts	1849-1856 (bulk 1851)	4	8
Mary Jane [Kemble] Chambers bills and receipts	1861-1897, n.d.	4	9
Mary Jane [Kemble] Chambers – S.K. Chambers & Bros. invoices	1877-1925	4	10
Folwell family	1883-1928, 1956	4	11
Sarah B. Chambers account book/diary	1886-1895	4	12

Miscellaneous	1793-1898, 1924, 1925, n.d.	4	13
---------------	--------------------------------	---	----

Series 4. Miscellaneous

Folder title	Date	Box/ Vol.	Folder
Richard Chambers ciphering book [cleaned for mold]	1792-1793	Vol. 3	n/a
Richard Chambers ciphering book [cleaned for mold]	1793	4	14
Richard Chambers ciphering book [cleaned for mold]	1794	4	15
John Chambers ciphering book [cleaned for mold]	1794	Vol. 4	n/a
Images and ephemera	ca. 1868-1954, 2008, n.d.	4	16
Rebecca L. Ballard – Putnam Seminary book	1875-1876	5	1
Rebecca B. Chambers travel diary and notes	1895	5	2
Rebecca B. Chambers travel diary and ephemera	1900	5	3
John J. Chambers diaries and “birthday book”	1882, 1887	5	4
John J. Chambers appointment books/diaries	1927-1928	5	5-6
Calling cards, membership cards, note w/dried flower	1883, 1904, 1916- 1920, n.d.	5	7
“Official map of Pennsylvania”	ca. 1920	5	8
Mary B. Chambers autograph book	1896	5	9
Mary B. Chambers diaries	1897-1899	6	1
Mary B. Chambers diaries	1900-1904	6	2-3
Mary C. Folwell diaries	1911, 1920	6	4-5
Mary C. Folwell scrapbook	ca. 1935	7	1
Loose items removed from ca. 1935 scrapbook	ca. 1935	7	2
Mary C. Folwell house and personal inventories book	ca. 1940-ca. 1954	7	3
Mary C. Folwell memoranda book	ca. 1953-ca. 1961	7	4
Mary C. Folwell “choral speaking” notebook	ca. 1954	7	5
Mary C. Folwell diaries	1957, 1958	7	6
Mary C. Folwell “moving to Merion Station” notebook	ca. 1958	7	7

Mary C. Folwell farm settlement and memoranda book	1959-1965	8	1
Mary C. Folwell trip to California notes	1960	8	2
Mary C. Folwell European trip notebook	1961	8	3
Mary C. Folwell – “Extracts from Rebecca B. Chambers 1918 diary”	ca. 1963	8	4
Mary C. Folwell Christmas list	1963	8	5
Mary C. Folwell address books	n.d.	8	6
Notes and drawing	n.d.	8	7
Unidentified notebooks and travel notes	n.d.	8	8

Appendix: Descendants of Richard Chambers

Generation No. 1

1. RICHARD⁴ CHAMBERS (*JOHN³, RICHARD², JOHN¹*) was born 1775, and died 1863. He married SUSANNA ADAMS. She was born 1786, and died 1876.

Children of RICHARD CHAMBERS and SUSANNA ADAMS are:

- i. SARAH BLACK⁵ CHAMBERS, b. 1811; d. 1897.
- ii. MARGARET CHAMBERS, b. 1813; d. 1855.
2. iii. JOHN W. CHAMBERS, b. 1816; d. Abt. 1868.
- iv. CAROLINE CHAMBERS, b. 1818; d. 1874.
- v. DAVID MCCAUSLAND CHAMBERS, b. December 04, 1820, New Castle County, DE; d. 1904.
- vi. ELIZABETH CHAMBERS, b. 1824; d. 1910.
- vii. RICHARD CHAMBERS, b. 1826; d. 1897.

Generation No. 2

2. JOHN W.⁵ CHAMBERS (*RICHARD⁴, JOHN³, RICHARD², JOHN¹*) was born 1816, and died Abt. 1868. He married MARY JANE KEMBLE 1841, daughter of SAMUEL KEMBLE and DEBORAH CHAMBERS. She was born 1818, and died 1906.

Children of JOHN CHAMBERS and MARY KEMBLE are:

- i. RICHARD M.⁶ CHAMBERS, b. 1843.
3. ii. SAMUEL KEMBLE CHAMBERS, b. February 19, 1845, Maryland; d. May 12, 1917, West Grove, PA.
- iii. DAVID B. CHAMBERS, b. 1846; d. 1847.
- iv. JOHN J. CHAMBERS, b. 1848; d. Abt. 1926.
- v. GEORGE R. CHAMBERS, b. 1849.
- vi. MARY CHAMBERS, b. 1853.
- vii. CHARLES CHAMBERS, b. 1858.

Generation No. 3

3. SAMUEL KEMBLE⁶ CHAMBERS (*JOHN W.⁵, RICHARD⁴, JOHN³, RICHARD², JOHN¹*) was born February 19, 1845 in Maryland, and died May 12, 1917 in West Grove, PA. He married REBECCA LAVINIA BALLARD 1877, daughter of MARTIN L. BALLARD. She was born March 29, 1858 in Canton, OH, and died April 1920.

More About SAMUEL KEMBLE CHAMBERS:

Burial: New London, PA

Children of SAMUEL CHAMBERS and REBECCA BALLARD are:

4. i. MARY BALLARD⁷ CHAMBERS, b. September 03, 1881; d. May 15, 1966.
- ii. HELEN HUNT CHAMBERS, b. February 13, 1885.

Generation No. 4

4. MARY BALLARD⁷ CHAMBERS (*SAMUEL KEMBLE⁶, JOHN W.⁵, RICHARD⁴, JOHN³, RICHARD², JOHN¹*) was born September 03, 1881, and died May 15, 1966. She married PHILIP DONALD FOLWELL October 12, 1904, son of NATHAN FOLWELL and SARAH HARNED. He was born May 22, 1881, and died 1955.

Children of MARY CHAMBERS and PHILIP FOLWELL are:

- i. NATHAN T. JR.⁸ FOLWELL, b. July 07, 1906; d. 1987.
- ii. MARY KEMBLE FOLWELL, b. February 10, 1908; m. HYDE BALLARD.
- iii. KATRINA R. FOLWELL, b. January 15, 1912; d. 1927.
- iv. JEAN HARNED FOLWELL, b. January 03, 1914; d. 1994; m. JOHN KENNETH CLINTON, July 28, 1934.
- v. PHYLLIS D. FOLWELL, b. July 01, 1921.
- vi. WILLIAM H. FOLWELL, b. August 07, 1924; d. 1997.