



The Historical
Society of
Pennsylvania

Collection 3089

**First Association of Spiritualists
of Philadelphia
Collection**

**ca. 1867-1955 (bulk ca. 1910-1950)
3 boxes, 4 flat files, 1 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: Timothy Smalarz
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Abstract

The First Association of Spiritualists of Philadelphia first met in 1852 and ratified its official constitution in 1864. This small collection contains a detailed scrapbook, printed materials, and the constitution of the organization. The collection also contains pamphlets, newspapers, and magazines documenting other Spiritualist groups in the Delaware Valley.

Background note

Kate and Margaret Fox established the Spiritualist faith in 1848 in Hydesville, New York, a few miles outside of Rochester. The Fox sisters' Spiritualists beliefs centered on the idea that spirits could be contacted through mediums. Three paramount beliefs of Spiritualism hold that "man is a spirit here and now, the spirit has unbroken and continued existence, and it can, under favorable conditions, communicate with those in this form."¹

The First Association of Spiritualists of Philadelphia first met in January 1852 and signed its official constitution on July 24, 1864, making it one of the oldest Spiritualist associations in the world. In 1865, the Spiritualists held their National Convention in Philadelphia. The central theme of the convention was to review the proper setup of the Spiritualists network.

The association held most of its early meetings and services in numerous halls around Philadelphia. One in particular came to be known as Harmonial Hall. In 1901, the association purchased a building at 12th and Thompson Streets and dedicated it as the Temple of the First Association of Spiritualists. In 1902, the association held its Golden Jubilee to commemorate the first meetings. In recognition of this achievement, the

¹ Caldwell, Mary E. *Historical Spiritualism: the First Association of Spiritualists in Philadelphia founded 1852*. Chicago: Progressive Thinker Pub. House, 1922.

association received greetings from the President of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt, and was given the privilege of planting a tree in Independence Square just outside of Independence Hall.

In 1931, the association sold the temple at 12th and Thompson Streets and moved its worshipping place to Master and Carlisle Streets' under the direction of Rev. Mamie B. Schulz where it flourished. The congregation held an annual Anniversary Sunday, which commemorated the establishment of the Spiritualist church. The event allowed the entire church community to participate in pageants and readings that incorporated the faith.

The First Association of Spiritualists of Philadelphia appears to have disbanded sometime during the latter half of the 20th century, although the Spiritualist faith still has various worshipping places within the city of Philadelphia.

Scope & content

This collection spans from about 1867 to 1955, with the bulk of the material dating from about 1910 to 1915. It includes a scrapbook, photographs, miscellaneous publications, and the Association's constitution. It contains mostly materials collected by the organization, rather than official administrative records of the organization. The scrapbook documents the activities of the First Association of Spiritualists in and out of the church from the 1880s to the 1950s. The scrapbook includes newspaper clippings, church bulletins, postcards, photographs, and private writings from church members. Correspondences with the Executive Mansion of Pennsylvania and the White House are part of the scrapbook.

Photos in the scrapbook document the association's places of worship, Anniversary Sunday services, pageants, and lyceum classes. There are also pictures of many prominent figures of the congregation including one of the earliest supporters of the Spiritualist faith, Andrew Jackson Davis. Pictures of Kate and Margaret Fox can also be found within the collection.

The collection also includes the association's constitution and group photos from various gatherings from 1900 to 1920. Copies of the *Progressive Thinker Newspaper* from 1934 and 1940 are also included. Miscellaneous Spiritualist publications include a songbook, monthly newsletter, and other booklets referring to the practice of the faith. Most of the materials were published between 1920 and 1950.

Separation report

Not applicable.

Related materials

Caldwallader, Mary E. *Historical Spiritualism: the First Association of Spiritualists in Philadelphia founded 1852*. Chicago: Progressive Thinker Pub. House, 1922.
HSP call number Wg*v.19

“Historical Highlights: The Shrine Church of International Spiritualism, organized year 1852.” Philadelphia: The First Association of Spiritualists of Philadelphia. (pamphlet)

First Association of Spiritualists: 1852. (circular) Sept. 1935
HSP call number E*.799

Bibliography

Caldwallader, Mary E. *Historical Spiritualism: the First Association of Spiritualists in Philadelphia founded 1852*. Chicago: Progressive Thinker Pub. House, 1922.

Child, Henry T. “Spiritualism in Philadelphia.” *Spirit History*.
<http://www.spirithistory.com/71yrbook.html>

First Association of Spiritualists: 1852 (circular) Sept. 1935.

Subjects

First Association of Spiritualists of Philadelphia
Lyceums - United States history- 19th century
Spiritualism in United States – 19th century
Spiritualism in United States – 20th century
Spiritualists - United States - 19th century
Spiritualists - United States - 20th century

Davis, Andrew Jackson, 1826-1910

Fox, Margaret, 1833-1893

Administrative Information

Restrictions

This collection is open for research.

Acquisition information

Gift of Kenneth J. Gibson, 1988

Accession 1988:11 and 1988:54

Preferred citation

Cite as: [Indicate cited item or series here] First Association of Spiritualists of Philadelphia Collection (Collection 3089), The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Box and folder listing

Folder title	Date	Box	Folder
Photocopies of scrapbook	1885 – 1955	1	N/A
Re-housed scrapbook	1885 – 1955	2	N/A
Various Spiritualist publications	1920 – 1950	3	4
Group photos	1900 – 1950	N/A	FF 1
<i>Progressive Thinker Newspaper</i>	1934	N/A	FF 2
<i>Progressive Thinker Newspaper</i>	1940	N/A	FF 3
Constitution	1867	N/A	FF 4